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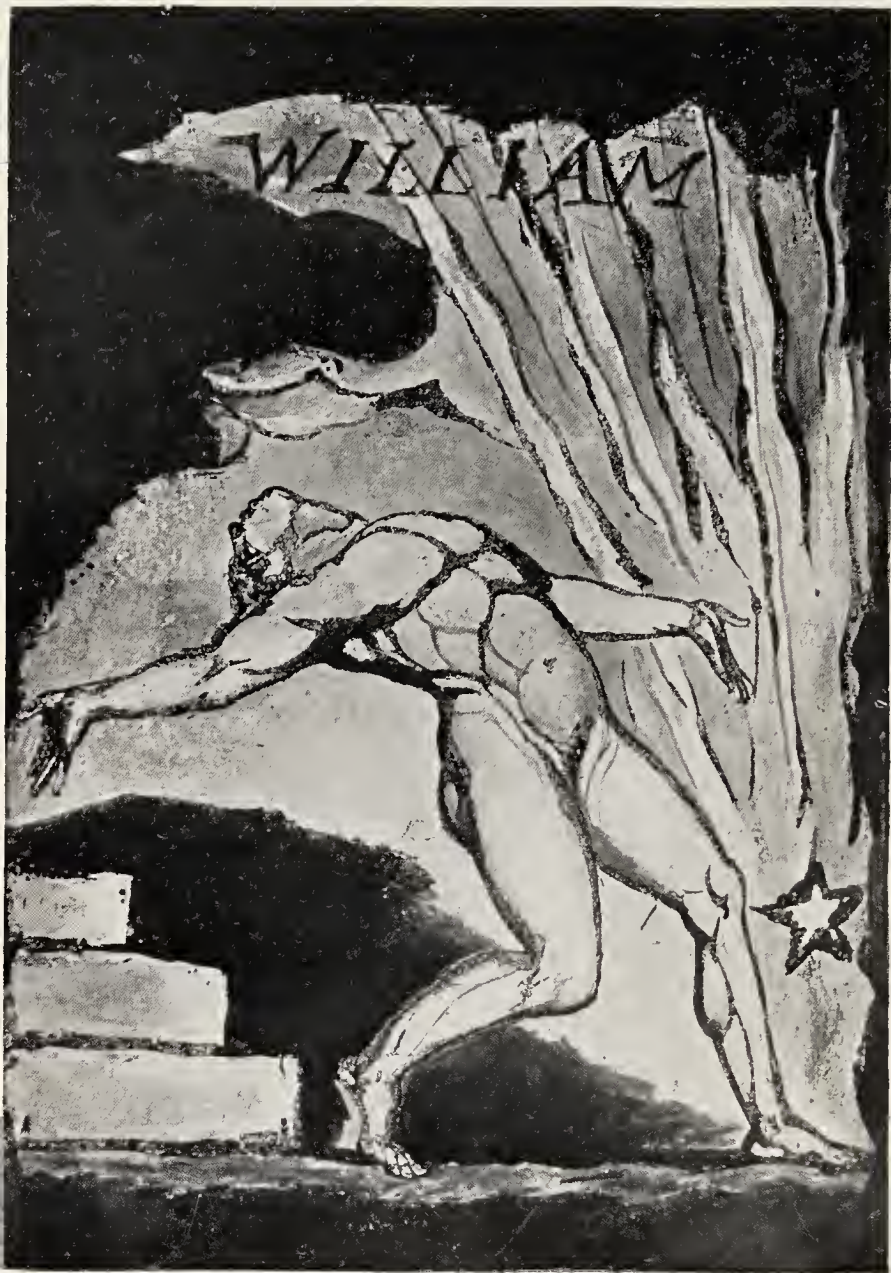
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William Blake, from an illustration in his Milton [7/8]

THE
LYRICAL POEMS
OF
WILLIAM BLAKE

TEXT BY
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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INTRODUCTION

WE know little of the life of William Blake ; and a great part of his written work, jotted down in pencil when the mood was on him, and subject to all the accidents of time and editorial patronage, has come to us only in fragments. Yet what we have reveals him for one of the boldest, most spontaneous, and most consistent of English poets and thinkers. There is no part of his writings, no casual recorded saying, or scribbled note on the margin of the books he read, which is not of a piece with all the rest. An absolute unity of character and purpose runs through all. Put him to the test, and he will re-word the matter, which madness would gambol from. Those who have read his work with the will and the power to learn, are ready to acknowledge him for what he claimed to be, a thinker and poet and seer.

His work is one prolonged vindication of the cause of all the artists in the world, and an apology for all those, whether saints or heretics, to whom religion means something other than a body and system of imposed discipline and law. Blake would have nothing to do with rational system. He trusted his vision absolutely, and believed only what he saw. When he built up the imaginative fabric of the Prophetic Books, his claim for them was that they are not fable nor allegory, but vision ; ‘an endeavour to restore what the Ancients called the

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Golden Age.' His motive for the elaborate structure is given in *Jerusalem*:—

I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's;
I will not Reason and Compare : my business is to Create.

What his eye saw was interpreted and supplemented by the fierce energies of his mind, bodying forth 'the forms of things unknown.' So he succeeded in giving a rendering of things which, in its darkness as in its light, is the creature of his own perception and his own imagination.

The most of mankind are so drilled and exercised, from earliest childhood, in codes of interpretation, that when they come to look at the world, and to ask questions of it, they cannot look at it on their own account. They see it by the light of half a dozen preconceived theories. They have learned a thousand glosses by heart before ever they attempt to read the text. So little accustomed are they to trust to their impressions, that even at a crisis they will make haste to escape from their own experience, and take refuge in authority and tradition. Safe enough guides these are, no doubt, for many of the affairs of life; but a poet must find a surer foothold if he is to move the world. He must speak because he has seen and known. 'The reason,' says Mr. Walter Bagehot, 'why so few good books are written, is that so few people that can write know anything. In general an author has always lived in a room, has read books, has cultivated science, is acquainted with the style and sentiment of the best authors, but he is out of the way of employing his own

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eyes and ears. He has nothing to hear and nothing to see. His life is a vacuum.' Mr. Bagehot is speaking of the width of experience that went to the making of Shakespeare, but his words are applicable also to the depth and intensity of experience that gave his message to Blake. Critical readers of poetry, and the poets themselves, have been much concerned with questions of form and expression. Should the thing be said that way or this? The previous question—why should the thing be said at all?—is often more troublesome to answer. Blake could answer it decisively and triumphantly. He spoke because the truth appeared to him as clear as the sun at noon-day, and would not be denied. The excuses and explanations which enable any reader so minded to escape from his vision were of no avail to him. He saw and knew ;—no reason or demonstration could make head against that. Unless we find ourselves compelled to adopt one of the nullifying hypotheses which are implicitly accepted by most of his eulogists, the only question for us is whether he has expressed himself clearly and fully enough to enable us to share in his vision. 'Truth,' he says himself, 'can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believed.' Are his own utterances intelligible? If he was a charlatan, or the dupe of his own excitable nerves, or a maniac, his work, at the best, is opalescent nonsense. But if he has succeeded, here and there, in raising the curtain on the life of things, it is the part of wisdom and modesty to suppose that the rest of his work, which is dark to us, is not devoid of meaning.

In poetry he stands outside the regular line of suc-

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cession, and, as he had no disciples, so he acknowledged no masters. 'The man, either painter or philosopher,' he says in his notes on Reynolds, 'who learns or acquires all he knows from others, must be full of contradictions.' Yet he began very early to write verse, and for the youthful poet there is no escape from imitation. Indeed, in another of his incisive notes, he admits the necessity. 'The difference,' he says, 'between a bad artist and a good is, that the bad artist *seems* to copy a great deal, the good one *does* copy a great deal.' Certainly, it is strange to observe how the young engraver's apprentice, meditating the muse, during his scanty leisure, in the City lanes round Holborn, while Doctor Johnson gave the law to literary society, found out for himself, as if by instinct, the poets who had most to teach him. His early work, printed in the *Poetical Sketches* of 1783, is full of memories and fragrances culled from Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Elizabethan song-writers. The lyric, 'My silks and fine array,' might almost have been written by an Elizabethan. The celebration of 'good English hospitality' is in the very vein of early popular poetry. And the *Song by an Old Shepherd*, beginning:—

When silver snow decks Sylvia's clothes,
And jewel hangs at shepherd's nose,

is the work of one fresh from the reading of *Love's Labour Lost* and *As You Like It*. By as natural a kinship Blake recognized the imaginative power of Macpherson and Chatterton, whose forgeries were the talk of the day. In such pieces as

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Gwin, King of Norway and *Fair Elenor* the ballad is revived, with that added sense of dream and magic which was the secret of the later poets of romance :—

My lord was like a star in highest heav'n
Drawn down to earth by spells and wickedness ;
My lord was like the opening eyes of day
When western winds creep softly o'er the flowers ;

But he is darken'd ; like the summer's noon
Clouded ; fall'n like the stately tree, cut down ;
The breath of heaven dwelt among his leaves.
O Elenor, weak woman, fill'd with woe !

And not less remarkable than his discovery of those poets, old or new, who could speak to him in the language of imagination, is his complete neglect of the fashionable models of his own time. In poetry, as in the other arts, Blake cared only for impulse, spontaneity, primal energy. 'A cistern contains,' he says ; 'a fountain overflows' ; and he was impatient of all the rules of measure and continence. In another of his proverbs he gives pithy utterance to the indictment which was to be brought by his successors against the verse of the eighteenth century : 'Bring out number, weight, and measure, in a year of dearth.' The case against the Augustan poets has never been more tersely put. But Blake shows no acquaintance with their works, and might almost be supposed never to have heard the name of Pope, were it not that, in a grotesque and whimsical parody on the style of that poet, he has recorded his contempt for all the wooden furniture of compliment and rhetoric :—

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Wondrous the Gods, more wondrous are the Men,
More wondrous, wondrous still, the Cock and Hen,
More wondrous still the Table, Stool and Chair;
But ah! more wondrous still the Charming Fair.

He would, no doubt, have been willing to apply to Pope's verses what he said of the drawings of Rubens and Le Brun, 'These things that you call Finish'd are not even Begun, how can they then be Finish'd?'

What he learned from those who went before him can only be guessed or inferred. We are on surer ground in asserting that he taught nothing to those who came after him. His poems, jotted down in his own notebooks, or printed by his own processes in issues that were hardly more accessible than the original manuscript, remained unknown to the public till many years after his death. A few lovers of poetry, Charles Lamb and Wordsworth among the number, when the Romantic Revival was already at its height, made acquaintance with the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and admired them as the work of genius, tainted perhaps with insanity. Yet in these songs and in other unprinted poems Blake had anticipated the Romantic movement in all its phases. The most characteristic doctrines of the diverse sects of that great school are all foreshadowed in stray lines of Blake's verse. Is it the metaphysical idealism of Coleridge's great Ode? Blake has expressed it in a single crude couplet:—

The Sun's Light, when he unfolds it,
Depends on the Organ that beholds it.

Is it Wordsworth's praise of the revelations of sense as

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compared with the processes of the tedious intellect? It appears already in Blake as *The Voice of the Ancient Bard*:—

Youth of delight, come hither,
And see the opening morn,
Image of truth new-born.
Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason,
Dark disputes and artful teasing.

Is it the enchantment of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*—
the happiness of dream, and the horror of awakening to
reality? Blake too had known it

Dear Child, I also by pleasant streams,
Have wander'd all Night in the Land of Dreams;
But tho' calm and warm the waters wide,
I could not get to the other side.

'Father, O father! what do we here
In this land of unbelief and fear?
The Land of Dreams is better far,
Above the light of the Morning Star.'

Is it, finally, the Revolutionary theology of Shelley? It is already fully developed in Blake; the king and the priest are types of the oppressor; humanity is crippled by 'mind-forg'd manacles'; love is enslaved to the moral law, which is broken by the Saviour of mankind; and, even more subtly than by Shelley, life is pictured by Blake as a deceit and a disguise veiling from us the beams of the Eternal. The poetical work of Blake, standing, as it does, out of direct relation to the literary history of his age, shows how vain is the attempt to treat the great movements of the human mind as originating in authors of books, or operating chiefly

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by way of literary influence. Thought, which in its slower and duller processes is contagious, escapes at times from our control, and lives in the air that we breathe.

Blake's creed came borne to him in no other way. He made it his declared aim 'to cast aside from Poetry all that is not Inspiration,' and to express his own vision of the world. A man who dares thus to trust himself cannot but be consistent, for inconsistency lies in inferences and arguments, not in the array of things seen. Blake would not make use of anything borrowed from others. 'He would have none of the existing mythologies,' says his editor, Mr. John Sampson, 'either Greek, or Norse, or Hebrew; but must create or evolve one of his own, expressing his spiritual convictions in a new symbolic language, written in his own new metres, and engraved and illustrated by his own hand in a new process of his own invention. In the Prophetic Books all the names and phrases are uniformly employed. Euclid would be a very uninforming work to a reader who thought that "parallel," "radius," "hypothénuse," were merely odd-sounding names with no particular meaning.' Although Mr. Swinburne's essay on Blake has furnished some hints and glimpses towards the understanding of the Prophetic Books, the task of interpretation still remains to be achieved. Whether Blake's whole scheme will ever be fully expounded is at best doubtful, but this much is clear, that no interpreter who regards it as a series of whimsical, unrelated and fitful utterances dare hope for success. 'God keep you and me,' Blake writes to

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a friend, 'from the divinity of yes and no too—the yea, nay, creeping Jesus—from supposing up and down to be the same thing, as all experimentalists must suppose.' He was wholly in earnest, felt no doubt as to the value of his message, and passed his life in the attempt to express it. Its very clearness to himself was a danger. He lived so long aloof from the ordinary traffic of human intelligence, that he came to write only for himself, and to employ terms in so arbitrary a significance, that his Prophetic Books are like an elaborate cipher, which can be unriddled only by the correspondences of its several parts. And the difficulty of a solution is much increased by the novelty of the meaning when once the meaning is attained. No domestic and familiar truths await the explorer in these labyrinths, rather the strange glow of the furnace at the heart of things, where the rocks are melted and the stuff of the enduring hills is prepared for its life on the surface of the earth.

Until some interpreter shall penetrate to these recesses it is impossible to criticize Blake's scheme from within. Los, Enitharmon, Rintrah, Theotormon, and other daily companions of his thought, to our apprehension are vague and overwhelming and intangible, 'scarce images of life,' stretched on the deep, like clouds. The regions inhabited by these Titanic creations oppress us with a sense of fear and homelessness. Now and again the reader catches hold of a clue, only to lose it again. The two souls of man, called by Blake his 'Spectre' and his 'Emanation,' the principle, that is to say, of reason, pride, and self-asser-

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tion, conceived of as a male, and that other principle of impulse, passion, and imagination which appeared to Blake in the likeness of a beautiful woman—who will not admit that this new psychology takes account of the facts of experience? But the symbolism is strange and difficult; moreover, when we have accepted it, we find that it only leads us onward into deeper and darker matters. The terror of being left alone in a world of strange shapes takes possession of us, and we are glad to give our guide the slip and return to the light of common day. The most of Blake's readers, and some even of his lovers, are content to leave the Prophetic Books unstudied, and to make what they can of the lyrical and occasional poems.

Here, too, there is difficulty enough, but we are nearer to the speech of every day. From the first all Blake's writing has the elemental character of great poetry. It is not the adventures of the elect, but what happens everywhere and always, that the poets declare to us. Those writers whose imagination is not strong and true will always try to make play with the exceptional or unexampled; but it is not thus that the Gods reveal themselves. Poetry is not a game of boasting; and the poet brings us back from our pathetic little vanities to confront us once more with the unchanging facts—lest we forget. His touch is as rare as truth. There are war-songs in plenty, pitched in a key of noisy self-glorification: 'We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.' How solemn and real Blake's *War Song to Englishmen*, written in early youth, sounds by the side of this heroic clap-

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trap—all because his imagination is at work, and he sees the facts:—

Prepare your hearts for Death's cold hand! prepare
Your souls for flight, your bodies for the earth;
Prepare your arms for glorious victory!
Prepare your eyes to meet a holy God!
Prepare, prepare.

There is no alloy of rhetoric in Blake's poetry. He lives among the elements, and is akin to them, and discerns them so clearly in all life and experience, that he has no patience with the doubtful processes of reasoning. For the blind he has no message:—

He's a Blockhead who wants a proof of what he can't
Perceive;
And he's a fool who tries to make such a Blockhead
believe.

As for those who see and are not satisfied with seeing, but must needs have further proof, their case is no better:—

He who Doubts from what he sees
Will ne'er Believe, do what you Please,
If the Sun and Moon should Doubt
They'd immediately Go Out.

His own faith was so simple and fervid that he could not give utterance to it save in the language of vision. The question as to what Blake saw and what he imagined he saw has much exercised his commentators. Doubtless he was gifted with the easily excited visual imagination of a painter. But the truth is that he would have found no interest and no meaning in the discussion. All that he believed seemed to come

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to him directly, like the light of the Sun, and he could not bear to have his perceptions questioned by those who had not seen. His commentators, with their large allowance for his genius, and their willingness to admit that there may be much in what he says, would have enraged him. He would have all or nothing; and even his admirers are not willing to face the consequences of giving him all. Mr. Gilchrist can find 'no leaven of real sense or acumen' in Blake's marginal notes on Bacon's *Essays*. 'Whatever Bacon may say,' remarks the plaintive biographer, 'his singular annotator refuses to be pleased.' Scattered down the margin of the book, we are told, are Blake's explosive comments—"liar," "villain," "atheist," nay, "Satan," and even (most singular of all) "stupid." The sentimental enthusiast, who worships all great men indifferently, finds himself in a distressful position when his Gods fall out among themselves. His case is not much unlike that of Terah, the father of Abraham, who (if the legend be true) was a dealer in idols among the Chaldees, and, coming home to his shop one day, after a brief absence, found that the idols had quarrelled, and the biggest of them had smashed the rest to atoms. Blake is a dangerous idol for any man to keep in his shop. He is not to be pacified by the fluttering good offices of his owner. 'Here,' pleads Mr. Gilchrist, after quoting a few of the marginal notes on Bacon, 'here let this singular dialogue at cross-purposes end.' To whom Blake—"This is certain: if what Bacon says is true, what Christ says is false." The answer to this last direct thrust is still to seek.

One theme preoccupies Blake in all his writings, and

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reappears in many forms—the theme to which he gave a name in the title of his book, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience, showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*. To reconcile the surprising and grave lessons of experience with those joyous revelations which come to eyes newly opened upon the world was his single problem, as it is the problem of all poets. The life-giving rays of the sun, which awakened the child to ecstasy, are found to parch and burn as the day moves on to its noon. Is there no light without heat; no joy, however natural and innocent, without its price exacted in pain? The trouble of the question comes to all, and cautious tempers forswear the delights offered to them, or enjoy them furtively and sparingly, from dread of a jealous God. The burnt child learns all too soon to shun the light. Doubt, misgiving, and fear assume control over the mind, and memory utters the final verdict:—

Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise.

It is the distinction of Blake, even among the poets, that the freshness of his early joys was never for an instant dulled or clouded by the inevitable ills of life. Experience and innocence are contrary states, but neither of them is of force to change the nature of the other. That profanity which is called disillusionment is impossible to a soul that has tasted joy in all its purity and fullness. ‘The man,’ said Blake, ‘who has never in his mind and thought travelled to heaven, is no artist.’ He had lived for long years in heaven; and nothing taught him by experience could cause him to renounce

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his faith, or to treat it as a by-gone happy illusion. He needed not the comfort that comes of children, for he never lost the simplicity and intensity of the child's mind that was in him. There is nothing in all poetry like the *Songs of Innocence*. Other writers—Hans Andersen, for instance—have penetrated into that enchanted country, have learned snatches of its language, and have seen some of its sights. But they are at best still foreigners, observers, emissaries; the golden treasures of innocence which they bring back with them they coin into pathos and humour for the use of their own countrymen. There is no pathos in Blake's innocent world; he is a native of the place, and none of the natives sits aloof to compare and ponder. There is no humour; the only laughter heard in that Paradise is the laughter of woods, and streams, and grasshoppers, and the sweet round mouths of human children. There the day is a festival of unceasing wonders, and the night is like the sheltering hand of God. There change is another name for delight, and the parting of friends is a prelude to new glories :—

Farewell, green fields and happy groves,
Where flocks have took delight.
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
The feet of angels bright;
Unseen they pour blessing,
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.

Death itself is an enterprise of high hope, an introduction to the Angel with the bright key who opens the long row of

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black coffins. Sorrow there is, and pity for sorrow; tears and bewilderment and darkness; but these things are all within the scheme, and do not open vistas into chaos. When the little boy is lost, God himself, dressed in white, appears by his side and leads him back to his weeping mother, to the world of daylight and shepherds, and lions with golden manes. One who has known this holy land, and has lived in it until it was overrun by infidel invaders—how should not his later life be a great crusade for its recovery?—

Bring me my Bow of burning gold !
Bring me my Arrows of desire !
Bring me my Spear ! O clouds, unfold !
Bring me my Chariot of fire !

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant Land.

To a temper thus ardent and direct and sincere, doubt is impossible. The question 'What shall we believe?' continues to exercise the world, because most dwellers in the world neglect the wonders of sense and imagination, daily presented to them, or count appearances trivial and deceitful, and look aside from them into vacancy for a phantom cause. Like the three Philosophers who figure in *An Island in the Moon*, these inquirers 'sit together thinking of nothing.' But to Blake, in the first flush of his manhood, the world, as it is given to us, was a thing 'bewildering hope, outrunning praise,' exhausting all the capabilities of faith. What unknown world could possibly satisfy the man who finds no

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grounds for faith in this world of the fields and the skies?
The auguries of Innocence are more confident:—

Joy and Woe are woven fine,
A Clothing for the Soul divine;
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.
It is right it should be so;
Man was made for Joy and Woe;
And, when this we rightly know,
Thro' the World we safely go.

The birth-speech of faith is the lyric. The purest lyrical utterances do not depend for their beauty on the arrangement of accents and the counting of syllables; translate them into any language, and they still run straight into song. There is no version of the Magnificat which does not rise lifted on a climbing sea of melody; it is the voice of the faith of all the women in the world. 'For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden'—what treatise on metre can explain that rapture of song? The spontaneity of whole-hearted joy will save it from all essential faults of expression; its only business is to flow, and it has no choice but to take the easiest outlet. Blake troubles himself not at all about metres; even in a professed imitation of Spenser he does not once succeed in hitting Spenser's stanza; but the life and soul of lyrical effect is assured to him by his very carelessness. It seems that he sang his own lyrics to tunes of his own choice, and shaped them by that loose prosody which music supplies. Further than this he acknowledged no law. All good things, in art as in life, were to him the gift of the

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Spirit, and the impulse that began a poem must end it, or the poem must remain unfinished. The American critic who maintained that there can be no such thing as a long poem might have found his happiest illustration in the works of Blake. Some of the poems, it is true, number a good many lines, yet do not fall into the flats of prose demonstration; but these are hardly ever single in effect; they come to a natural close in a few stanzas, and the prophetic fury is renewed in a fresh outburst. The dutiful and laborious execution of a long task originally conceived in a happy moment of insight, was impossible to Blake. To continue working when the fever-fit was overblown would have been to work without conviction and possibly without meaning.

His name has, therefore, been made the text for many discourses on the nature of genius and inspiration. To hear this subject discussed in ordinary societies of men one would think that the human race is a nation of slaves and idolaters. Every kind of tribute is offered to the unhappy man of genius, save the sole tribute that is of value to him, the tribute of fellowship, equality, love, and understanding. He is full of the breath and zest of humanity, and is treated as though it were morbid to be inspired. He sees what is around him with a clear eye; he acts from quick native human impulse; and he is awarded a place apart, as a genius, to be revered rather than trusted. The gifts with which he is so plentifully dowered, for all that they are looked askance at as abnormal and portentous, are the common stuff of human nature, without which life would flag and cease.

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No man destitute of genius could live for a day. No intuitive movement of feeling or sudden flash of conviction but is inspired as truly as the prophecy of the seer. Genius is spontaneity, the life of the soul asserting itself triumphantly in the midst of dead things. Inspiration is a short name for all that comes to us immediately, with the warrant of ultimate certainty. The certainty cannot be communicated to others at second-hand. If the man whose inspiration is full and frequent cannot teach us to breathe and to see, he can teach us nothing. We shall lead a sickly life if we try to support ourselves on the spare products of his generous vitality. We must try, and taste, and act for ourselves, on the assurance of our own vision.

These unprompted movements of the human soul, rejoicing in its freedom, and dilating itself against the force of circumstance, give to life the greater part of its meaning and its zest. But these are not enough to carry all human souls through the long campaign of life. The world is vast and complex and unrelenting, and the energies of the soul prove fitful and languid. Some support and shelter is needed for those times when we are taken at unawares, when our sympathies are not alert, and our vision is clouded, and our power of initiative is paralysed by doubt. At times like these men crutch themselves on 'principles' of action, or seek relief by resting on the strength of an accepted law. Even love gives no unerring light; even joy is not always its own security. The need of others sometimes fails to inspire us; our own experience sometimes fails to transform itself into vital

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motive. Then we must fall back upon our defences, and do our duty. The mechanism of society and institution and custom cannot be based on the shifting chances of inspiration. Yet all law, even the law that is forced on its reluctant victim by the stronger interests of others, is active in some minds in its primal form of inspiration. The strength of law consists in this, that men are daily carrying out its behests, with no consciousness of compulsion or obedience, from sheer delight in their own discernment and their own power. These are the makers of the law; the others are its captives and slaves. All morality has been invented, and is continually re-invented, and gives to its discoverer a sense of elation like that which the artist finds in the work of his hands. One man's duty is another man's pleasure. What appears to one man as a cold and alien power, to be dreaded and revered, is to another man the living energy that circulates in his veins and flashes in his thought.

Blake trusted so entirely to his instincts, his life was so made up of quick feeling and creative impulse, that Law and Institution, as they exist in the world, seemed to him a dull and evil imposition, maintained by the passions which are hostile to life—fear, and envy, and cunning selfishness. State and Church, King and Priest, were hateful to him, but most of all he hated the slow processes of the inductive reason, or, to give them their accepted name, Science. There is some danger of confusion here, for Blake often mentions Science, and almost invariably in a strain of the highest eulogy. 'O ye religious, discountenance every one among you who shall

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pretend to despise Art and Science ! I call upon you in the name of Jesus ! What is the Life of Man but Art and Science ?' By Science, here and elsewhere, he means intuitive knowledge, insight and imagination at work on the individual objects of man's regard. He means, indeed, what he says in a prose passage of *Jerusalem* : 'I know of no other Christianity, and of no other gospel, than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination.' Over against these energies of the inward light must be set all the methods and results of rational demonstration, which Blake inveighs against by the name of Reason, and Philosophy, and Natural Religion, but which are familiar to-day under the name of Science. 'To generalize,' he says curtly, 'is to be an idiot. To particularize is the great distinction of merit.' In this, as in all things, his attitude is consistent and single. General rules for conduct, general truths of observation, general canons of Art, even the vague and general tone and colouring of the great Venetian painters, all these were the same to him—stupid make-shifts for escaping from the only things worth knowing, those Minute Particulars, namely, which are given directly in perception and cannot be reached by a train of inference. His doctrine of Art is his doctrine of Morals ; what is care for detail and outline in the one is reverence and imagination in the other :—

He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars.

General good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite and flatterer ;

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For Art and Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars,
And not in the generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power.
The Infinite alone resides in Definite and Determinate Identity.

In more homely fashion he illustrates the same conclusion by the fable of the dog who dropped the definite and determinate bone to catch at the vague perfections of its shadow, and so lost shadow and substance too. 'He had them both before,' says Blake, in one of those terse and far-reaching sentences which crop up everywhere, even in his idlest rhymes.

This doctrine, in all its bearings, is the soul and centre of Blake's teaching on Art, Religion, Morals, and Politics. He was never tired of inveighing against Reason as the only sin. 'The Classics,' he says, 'it is the Classics, and not the Goths nor Monks, that desolate Europe with Wars.' The same reasoning power which gives laws to literature establishes the tyranny of empire :—

The Strongest Poison ever known
Came from Caesar's Laurel Crown.

And again, in *Jerusalem* :—

The Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man; and when
separated
From Imagination, and closing itself as in steel, in a Ratio
Of the Things of Memory, It thence frames Laws and
Moralities
To destroy Imagination, the Divine Body, by Martyrdoms
and Wars.

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The Reasoning Power is an abstract objecting power that negatives everything—a negation of the substance from which it is derived, a murderer of its own body, and of every divine member. Its strength is the strength of a terrible mechanism, its methods are the methods of violence, and its work is the crushing out of all things that have in them the separate germs of life. It is the abomination of desolation.

It would be difficult to find anywhere a more complete and eloquent statement of the creed of Anarchy than is contained in Blake's writings. Those who conceive of that creed as the child of hatred begotten by confused thinking, may here correct their view. Blake is an anarchist because his heart goes out in sympathy to life in all its careless and joyous manifestations, and because he has the courage to hold fast by what he loves. The Angels, as he describes them, are also anarchists, natives of the element, creatures of simple love and impulse. The strange power of a good conscience and of singleness of mind is seen in the freedom and success with which the Angels set law at naught. They may steal a hundred horses, where the man of principle, the man, that is, who is the victim of doubt and moral struggle, may not look over the hedge. Blake never failed to pay his tribute of admiration to the power of innocence, confident in itself, acting on its own sure initiative, and seeking for no support from others. He recognized these impulses of the heart even in the apostles of doubt and negation. Voltaire as the mocker of Christian faith, and the setter-up of the rule of

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Reason, appears again and again in Blake's writings as the adversary of the Spirit. But Voltaire was also a rebel to established law, and a man of quick and generous impulse. In conversation with Crabb Robinson, Blake described how Voltaire had appeared to him in vision, and had talked with him. 'I blasphemed the Son of Man,' said Voltaire, 'and it shall be forgiven me; but my enemies blasphemed the Holy Ghost in me, and it shall not be forgiven them.' The thoughts and deeds that spring from an inward necessity are the only work of the Spirit. Blake is much more profound in his exposition of these things than Shelley, or any other of the Revolutionary poets. Government he sees as a necessary outcome of the rule of Reason; and he attacks the main position:—

I turn my eyes to the Schools and Universities of Europe,
And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages
dire
Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation: and Works
Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs
tyrannic
Moving by compulsion each other: not as those in Eden,
which
Wheel within Wheel in freedom revolve in harmony and
peace.

This dark Satanic mill, the Reasoning power, which overshadows humanity, has woven, for a garment of oppression, the woof and warp of Good and Evil—two contraries, qualities with which every substance is clothed, but which are abstracted from their substances and made into a universal

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and shadowy pall. On this problem of Good and Evil Blake is always strangely illuminative and searching. What he says, though it does not lightly unriddle that mystery, bears all the marks of clear perception and profound belief. He was fond of talking on this theme to Crabb Robinson, who did not understand him. He would not admit the real existence of Evil; errors there are in the world, no doubt, said he, but these are only negations. 'What are called vices in the natural world are the highest sublimities in the spiritual world.' He was here speaking, it seems likely, not of negations, errors of timidity and weakness, but of the great positive deeds of passion and rebellion. Of the natural world 'It is all nothing'; he would say, 'and Satan's empire is the empire of nothing.' On one occasion Crabb Robinson ventured to remark that if the distinction between good and evil is of no importance, there is no use in education. Blake replied, 'There *is* no use in education. I hold it to be wrong. It is the great sin. It is eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was the fault of Plato. He knew of nothing but the virtues and vices, and good and evil. There is nothing in all that. Everything is good in God's eyes.' Crabb Robinson, pursuing his objection, asked if there is then nothing evil in what men do; and Blake replied, 'I am no judge of that. Perhaps not in God's eyes.' This Crabb Robinson finds to be inconsistent with what Blake said in a subsequent conversation, when the purity of Dante's character was under discussion: 'Pure, do you think there is any purity in God's eyes? The angels in heaven are no

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more so than we. "He chargeth his angels with folly." But so far from being inconsistent, the two statements are mutually dependent. Blake could not bear to have the moral judgements of men authorized by being attributed to the Eternal. 'Who shall say,' he asked, 'that God thinks evil? That is a wise tale of the Mahometans of the angel of the Lord that murdered the infant. Is not every infant that dies of disease murdered by an angel?'

In his description of his picture of the Last Judgement he has given fuller expression to some of his ideas on this subject. 'I do not consider either the just or the wicked to be in a supreme state; but to be every one of them states of the sleep which the soul may fall into in its deadly dreams of good and evil, when it leaves Paradise following the serpent.' And again, 'The treasures of heaven are not negations of passions, but realities of intellect, from which the passions emanate, uncurbed in their eternal glory. The fool shall not enter into heaven, let him be ever so holy. Holiness is not the price of entrance into heaven. Those who are cast out are all those who, having no passions of their own, have spent their lives in curbing and governing other people's by the various arts of poverty and cruelty of all kinds. The modern church crucifies Christ with the head downwards.'

It is only by a comparison of Blake's scattered utterances on this subject that the consistency and singleness of his doctrine is made apparent. His note on Homer's poetry shows how the same strain of thought is applied to Art—from which indeed, in all likelihood, it had its origin.

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‘Aristotle says Characters are either Good or Bad: now Goodness or Badness has nothing to do with Character, an Apple-tree, a Pear-tree, a Horse, a Lion are Characters, but a Good Apple-tree or a bad, is an Apple-tree still; a Horse is not more a Lion for being a Bad Horse: that is its Character, its Goodness or Badness is another consideration.’ To tell Blake of any individual man that he was good or bad was to tell him nothing to the purpose; ‘I have never known,’ he said, ‘a very bad man who had not something very good about him.’ He cried out on all who sit in judgement on others. ‘Of the Old Testament,’ says Crabb Robinson, ‘he seemed to think not favourably. Christ, said he, took after his mother, the Law’—a statement which he explained by referring to the turning out of the money-changers from the Temple. In short, these moral distinctions of good and bad seemed to Blake to be the most mischievous of Universal forms, or abstract terms, devised by the Reasoning power of man as sign-posts, to guide him or warn him in the pursuit of his selfish ends. By the use of these vague and general distinctions all that is most characteristic or significant in the individual object was obliterated, he thought, and lost. So Los, exploring the mental states symbolized by London districts,

Saw every minute particular, the jewels of Albion, running
down
The kennels of the streets and lanes as if they were
abhorr’d.
Every Universal Form was become barren mountains of
Moral

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Virtue; and every Minute Particular harden'd into grains
of Sand:

And all the tendernesses of the soul cast forth as filth
and mire.

'The Moral virtues do not exist,' said Blake. 'They are allegories and dissimulations. But Time and Space are real beings.' And the minute particulars—'the little ones,' as Blake calls them—which are of faith and not of demonstration, the things seen and felt, which are moments in the life of man; these exist, and are eternal;

To those who enter into them they seem the only substances,

For every thing exists and not one sigh nor smile nor tear,
One hair nor particle of dust, not one can pass away.

This is the real world, created out of the void as an act of mercy, the world which its Creator looked on, and behold, it was very good. It is the manifestation of that energy which is eternal delight.

The sea-fowl takes the wintry blast for a covering to her limbs:

And the wild snake the pestilence to adorn him with
gems and gold:

And trees and birds and beasts and men behold their
eternal joy:

Arise you little glancing wings and sing your infant joy!
Arise and drink your bliss, for everything that lives is
holy!

Most men to whom has been granted the clear dream
and the solemn vision, have felt impelled, at the maturity

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of their powers, to descend from the mount of contemplation, and to endeavour, in the dust and heat of the arena, to do something for the better ordering of human life. But Blake, believing in no institutions, felt no such temptation. The poet, to whom is given imagination and vision, is false to his faith if he turns his back on the revelation in order to handle the machinery of worldly power and worldly ambition. The most famous of the poets who took up with these lowlier tasks are severely censured by Blake. Of Dante he said, 'He was an Atheist—a mere politician, busied about this world, as Milton was, till in his old age he returned to God, whom he had had in his childhood.' The anarchist's objection to Law, the mystic's objection to Rational process, are no less strong when Law and Reason become weapons in the hand of a triumphant democracy. Blake goes straight to the point when he speaks of the aims of the Revolutionary party. 'You cannot have liberty,' he said, 'in this world, without what you call moral virtue, and you cannot have moral virtue without the subjection of that half of the human race who hate what you call moral virtue.' So tyranny succeeds to tyranny, self-righteousness is throned, and the age of innocence and brotherhood is more remote than ever.

Yet these things are; and Blake is forced to recognize the existence of Evil. The experience came to him late and slowly. His whole-hearted joy in the world kept the enemy for long at bay. Even in the *Songs of Experience* the old simplicity and happiness reassert themselves:

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For I dance,
And drink, and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

He does not agonize with the Fate that holds him in its grasp; his peaceful, almost infantine, submission to the Power that is so cruelly strong in its dealings with those who struggle against it, saved him from anything like a tragedy of thought. He lay still, and knew no fear. The trouble, when it came to him, came in the form, not of doubt, but of bewilderment and sorrow of heart. The reign of love and of natural happy impulse is partial and precarious. Against it are ranked all the baser passions—fear, envy, anger, jealousy, covetousness—which Blake unites under the single name of Self-hood. These restrain the innocent desires of man, and combat his natural promptings, and paralyse his will, and deny his instinctive faith. In place of pity and dear mutual forgiveness, they set up a spectral fiend whose only word is 'Thou shalt not,' a polypus of death, withering the human form by laws of chastity and abhorrence. The struggle between this Satan and the redeeming power of love and pity is the central theme of all the Prophetic Books, and is there set forth with an immense array of visionary terminology, yet clearly enough in effect. The whole creation groans and travails; but Blake never wavers in his belief that the empire of Satan is the empire of nothing. Self-hood is not a positive and creative power; it is a distorted and reversed reflexion in darkness and non-entity. The passions on which its

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reign is built are themselves mere negations ; they drain the blood, and arrest the beating of the heart, and are inimical to life in all its forms. Fear, which is the chief and most terrible of them, is the parent of all the rest, and is lord over

the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given.

While the soul is a fount of action, spending itself without stint on outward objects, joy and faith are supreme ; but when its activities flag, when it becomes distrustful of itself and afraid of the world, defensive, secretive, eager to husband its resources, it falls under the control of Satan, and reasons, and doubts, and inhibits, and measures, and denies. Everything that it touches is blighted by the contact.

He who bends to himself a joy
Doth the wingèd life destroy ;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

Blake saw the whole of human life, not as a drama of the fall and redemption of man in great decisive acts, but as a continual fall and a continual redemption. Angels, he said, are always becoming devils ; every man has a devil ; and the conflict is eternal between a man's self and God. He saw it, not as a golden world suffering from the tyranny of an external oppressor, whose downfall shall herald the millennium, but as a long intestinal antipathy and struggle between native forces, to be ended only by conciliation and a new method of harmony. In his earlier work he often seems to speak of the thwarting and negating forces as if they

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were intrusive and removable. But his thought did not long rest content with the almost idiotic simplicity of Revolutionary theory. If Self-hood be the enemy, the enemy is in possession of the citadel; and any call to arms for the defence of man is answered by traitors, who exact the price of their service rendered to the cause of liberation by ensconcing themselves more closely in domestic and moral tyranny. The dual nature of man is an old and difficult problem, which has exercised all poetry that pretends to thought:

Oh, wearisome condition of humanity!
Born under one law, to another bound,
Vainly begot, and yet forbidden vanity,
Created sick, commanded to be sound;
What meaneth nature by these diverse laws?

Blake, following the mystic who wrote the account of the Fall in Genesis, found the only likely explanation and answer where it had been found before him by Plato, and by the poets of the East, and by the most philosophic of the Elizabethans—in the fact of sex.

Here, at the very heart of things, there is war and division;

For the strife of Love's the abysmal strife,
And the word of Love is the Word of Life.

The most mysterious and strongest of all forms of self-assertion is built into the life of the race. Man, who dreams of harmony within himself and of benevolence towards others, is mocked and hunted by a tyrant passion which sets him at odds with the world, defeats his reason, and laughs at his

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purposes. The desire which dominates his life is that which gave him birth :

Our blood to us, this to our blood is born.

If he attempt escape, the only way that lies open to him leads to emaciation and death. A heaven of delight and the well-being and perpetuity of his kind is promised to him as the reward of his triumph in aggression and self-assertion. The love that makes the world go round is elemental, savage, exclusive, defiant, in man for woman, in woman for the child of her throes. Every man, by the law of his being, is an adventurer and a warrior; every woman, by the law of her being, is bound to regard herself as her dearest trust. The treaties, the armistices, the conquests and surrenders, the flights and pursuits that mark the course of the long war of the sexes are incidents in a campaign where victory is the prize of self-assertion. Generosity and self-sacrifice, where they occur, are the luxuries of the victor or the forbearances of the powerful.

The cruel splendours and relentless self-seeking of the passion of love are directly opposed to the gentleness, pity, and self-annihilation of that other love which seeketh not its own. The contrast between the two is often set forth by Blake. In the little poem called *The Clod and the Pebble* he gives a voice to each. The clod of elay, trodden beneath the cattle's feet, sings thus :—

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

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And the Pebble of the brook, polished, rounded, and self-contained, replies :—

Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.

Most of the religions and philosophies which have taught self-sacrifice have been driven in the direction of nihilism; they have either condemned all natural lusts, or they have fenced them off from the precincts of religion, giving them permission to roam at will in the outskirts. Neither of these courses was possible to Blake. Desire was still to him the authentic voice of the divinity in man; and the cherishing of unacted desires was an offence against humanity :

Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs and flaming hair,
But Desire gratified
Plants fruits of life and beauty there.

The gratification of desire needs no law and no argument to prove it good; even from the tomb the voice of nature cries :

Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering church-yard?

And a palace of eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave?
Over his porch these words are written, Take thy bliss O Man!

Blake said that Milton once appeared to him and warned him not to be misled by *Paradise Lost* into thinking that carnal pleasures arose from the Fall. 'The Fall could not produce any pleasure.'

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In all this there is difficulty and contradiction enough. Pleasure is a divine good, but pleasure is entangled with self-hood, which is the great evil. The contradiction is in the things themselves, not in the statement of them; and it is the genesis of Blake's mysticism. The body of death which oppresses us, the whole 'Vegetable Universe' which clogs the swift spirit of life and joy, is identified by Blake with Nature herself. 'I fear Wordsworth loves nature,' he said to Crabb Robinson, 'and nature is the work of the Devil. The Devil is in us as far as we are nature.' The same thought appears in his poem *To Tirzah*—the goddess who stands in his mythology for the religion of Nature:—

Thou Mother of my Mortal part
With cruelty didst mould my Heart,
And with false self-deceiving tears
Didst bind my Nostrils, Eyes, and Ears;
Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay,
And me to Mortal Life betray:
The Death of Jesus set me free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

When Blake uses the language of Christian theology, as he so frequently does, he gives to it his own meaning. The second of the foregoing stanzas needs for comment some such passage as the following, taken from his notes *For the Year 1810*:—'All things are comprehended in their eternal forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the true vine of eternity, the Human imagination, who appeared to me as coming to judgement among his Saints, and throwing off the temporal that the eternal might be established.' In the

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real, eternal, or imaginative world—for the terms are used interchangeably—the warring powers that divide the empire of the soul of man are reconciled and united. Heaven and Hell, in this scheme, are not true opposites; they are the dwelling-places of those divorced powers of the soul whose greatest glory and strength shall be found in their ultimate union. Between the two realms angels are continually ascending and descending. When the long severance shall find an end, when love shall be the only fulfilling of the law, when the power that hides in Self shall cease to oppose and deny, and shall be merged in joyous impulse, the consummation of all things will be attained in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

In the meantime Blake recognizes only one religion for dwellers on this earth, the religion of the continual forgiveness of sin. This is the Religion of Jesus, ‘the most Ancient, the Eternal and the Everlasting Gospel.’ There is nothing more wonderful in Blake’s poetry than the long fragmentary poem on this theme, inspired throughout with a kind of divine frenzy.

Jesus was sitting in Moses’ Chair.
They brought the trembling woman there.
Moses commands she be ston’d to death.
What was the sound of Jesus’ breath?
He laid his hand on Moses’ Law;
The ancient heavens, in silent awe,
Writ with Curses from Pole to Pole,
All away began to roll.

Whenever Blake speaks on this subject of forgiveness,

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what he says is full of insight and beauty. In his notes on the Last Judgement these passages occur :—

‘It is not because angels are holier than men or devils that makes them angels, but because they do not expect holiness from one another, but from God only.’

‘Angels are happier than men or devils because they are not always prying after good and evil in one another, and eating the tree of Knowledge for Satan’s gratification.’

The three Furies he represented, contrary to the usual practice, as male beings, and he adds this quaint note, ‘The spectator may suppose them clergymen in the pulpit, scourging sin instead of forgiving it.’ Forgiveness, as Blake conceives of it, allows of no limits. If it be offered in consideration of amends made, or on condition that the offence be not repeated, it is a bargain and not forgiveness. The only true forgiveness is a movement of love and pity called forth by the offence as inevitably as a grain of sand in the eye will cause the tears to flow. And this is the beginning and the end of religion. By Blake’s account of the matter, evil, in all its terror and potency, like Satan armed in gold, came into the world not with the first offence, but with the first judgement on the offender. It is from the judgement-seat that clouds of blood and ruin have rolled over the world. ‘Come then,’ he says, in his daring apostrophe at the end of the second part of *Jerusalem*,—

Come then, O Lamb of God, and take away the remembrance of Sin.

The live power of this belief in Blake’s own mind and

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heart may be seen in those poems—and they are many—which reveal the marvels of his tenderness. There was surely never a poet whose feelings responded more delicately to all the appeals of frailty and weakness and ignorance and helplessness. The poem called *Auguries of Innocence* is a lexicon of pity, and a biography of the gentle heart. Some of the couplets of which it is made up are idylls of beauty :

The wild Deer wand'ring here and there
Keeps the Human Soul from Care.

Some have that strange metaphysical insight which sees all things in each, and eternity in an hour :

He who torments the Chafer's Sprite
Weaves a Bower in endless Night.
The Catterpillar on the Leaf
Repeats to thee thy Mother's grief.
Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly
For the Last Judgment draweth nigh.

This, and other poems laden with the thought that springs from the heart—poems like *The School Boy*, or *A Little Boy Lost* in the *Songs of Experience*—give meaning to Blake's claim that pity is vision and that sympathy with weakness is strength :

For a Tear is an Intellectual thing:
And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King:
And the bitter groan of a Martyr's woe
Is an Arrow from the Almighty's Bow.

The sweetness and the rapture of desire give place, in the later poems, to the more unchanging love that is born of

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sorrow. Here, at last, love has found the secret of peace and endurance :

I thought Love lived in the hot sunshine,
But O, he lives in the Moony light !
I thought to find Love in the heat of Day,
But sweet Love is the Comforter of Night.

Seek Love in the Pity of others' Woe,
In the gentle relief of another's care,
In the darkness of night and the Winter's Snow,
In the naked and outcast, seek Love there !

Blake deals with the deepest and most obscure problems, and deals with them, for the most part, in a language of his own. His biographers and critics have found it work enough to attempt the mere exposition of his views, and have refrained from discussion and criticism. While the understanding of his meaning is still so far from complete, how should there be a sure ground for controversy ? Those parts of his work which are written in any recognized metre have now, at last, found a trustworthy and scholarly editor in Mr. John Sampson. But much remains to do before the field is open for the critic. All the extant works must be competently and reverently edited. A concordance of the Prophetic Books must be prepared, marking the appearances and functions of each of the personages of the visionary mythology. If this essay, which pretends to no such ordered exposition, has succeeded in showing that Blake's meaning, caught here in flying glimpses from the less obscure of his writings, promises good hope of reward to the more laborious

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experiment, it has done all it can do. Fuller criticism must be reserved for fuller knowledge.

Yet even the reader of Blake who has brought no systematic implements to the work of mining, but has wandered and browsed on the surface of the Prophetic Books, may without offence record his superficial and modest impressions. To the most casual observer there is something remarkable in the history of this prophet and of his works. It is more than a hundred years since he made his first appearance, and he has found a fair number of biographers, editors, and expositors. Yet no one of these can speak with authority. Some have made of him a mere groundwork on which to embroider their own opinions; some have lavished the highest praise on the imitative work of his boyhood, and have ignored his later, stronger, and darker work; some have seen in him a clumsy writer of allegories; some have thrown the whole force of their criticism into a discussion of the nature and methods of madness. There is not one of the number but has parted from his task with a sense of dissatisfaction and defeat. Blake is a prophet without disciples.

His imaginative mythology may yield up its meaning to the rack and thumb-screw of a scientific criticism: it yields neither pleasure nor enlightenment to the wandering lover of beauty. In this world of howling and groaning giants all is violence and contortion and monotony. Here and there in the Prophetic Books the reader finds, with a sweet sense of relief, that he has strayed into an oasis:

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A little moony night and silence,
With Spaces of sweet gardens and a tent of elegant beauty :
Closed in by a sandy desert and a night of stars shining,
And a little tender moon, and hovering angels on the wing.

But he must take up his burden again, and go forth into the gloomy desert of the Titans. He will need all his faith and determination if he is to escape from the assaults of the recurring doubt—is it possible that the secret of human life lies hid in this darkness, or that these shadowy and grotesque nonentities are true symbols of God's eternal variety and plenty poured out in the world of sun and rain?

Blake started in life with as pure and tender a gift of imagination as has ever fallen to the lot of man. If that imagination went astray, some explanation is needed. His own doctrine of the imagination gives cause for disquietude. 'Imagination,' he said, 'is the divine vision, not of the world, nor of man, nor from man as he is a natural man, but only as he is a spiritual man. Imagination has nothing to do with memory.' And again, 'Natural objects always did, and now do, weaken, deaden, and obliterate imagination in me.' 'I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance and not action.' This doctrine, let it be said in all sincerity, may be good and true for the seer; it is certainly bad and false for the artist. It leaves Blake without a reason for drawing a man with two legs. His own pictorial art suffered from his belief that nature is the work of the devil. At its best, it has great nobility and dignity of outline, a grave solemnity, and

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a keen feeling for little tendernesses of attitude and incident. But he uses his eyes too seldom, so that his treatment of the human figure is habitually crude, violent, exaggerated, and wilful. Nature, whatever be the power that created her, is unfailing in the revenge she takes on the man who cheapens her. Let an artist neglect the loving study of the life, and his work will lose power even while he talks. If Blake's powers miscarried, it was not from any failure of his reason, which remained strong and sane to the end, but from the pride of his imagination, which mocked the meat it should have fed on. It seems almost as if, in the language of his own mythology, his Spectre had usurped the seat of his imaginative powers, and had made these powers the engine of a violent egotism; while his Emanation, under whose genial impulse he had written the *Songs of Innocence*, and had poured out his heart to the natural world in many tender, feminine observances, lay bound in captivity, 'weeping incessantly for his sin.' In his prophetic fury he lost touch with the natural world, and lost something of that humility and expectancy which alone can make the natural world a school for the powers of the artist.

It was an ill day for Blake when he first made acquaintance with the works of Emmanuel Swedenborg. Up to that time the Bible and the poems of Milton had been, beyond compare, the most influential of the books he had read. Swedenborg offered him a new method, utterly unlike anything to be found in Milton, and without adequate scriptural precedent, save in parts of the weakest and last of the books of the New

INTRODUCTION

Testament. The writings of Swedenborg have something of the fascination of authentic vision; but the springs of refreshment trickle out from mountains of inanity and laborious pedantry. Blake was, in a certain sense, illiterate, even to the end; and Swedenborg was the worst possible teacher for him. It is easy to decry the academic processes of verbal education, but these processes have their uses. They do little, it is true, to enrich a man's nature, or to increase his reserve of natural power. But they put him on his guard against the deceits of verbiage, and render him immune from the insidious encroachments of high-sounding nonsense. They submit even the imagination to a civil and social discipline, and compel the bard to express himself with a decent respect for the intellectual habits of his fellow men. This classic discipline, which has never yet, by itself, been the making of a good poet, but which has saved the world from the pretentious follies of many a dunce and the brilliant futilities of many a man of genius, was exactly what Blake most needed. But he was born in an age when the masters of this grave and ancient school had fallen half-asleep over their task, and were droning out lessons that made but little appeal to the affections and the imagination; so that he recoiled from them in contempt, and fell into the arms of the first enthusiast who held out to him glittering promises. He passes some cool enough criticisms, it is fair to say, on the system of Swedenborg. Swedenborg, he said, was a Divine teacher; but was wrong 'in endeavouring to explain to the rational faculty what the reason cannot comprehend. He should have left that.' Yet, though the

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doctrine of correspondences, in all its monstrous mechanical elaboration, failed of acceptance, the virus of the system, with its symbolism and esoteric vision, passed into Blake's thought, and made a galloping progress. To one whose visualizing power was naturally strong almost to the point of hallucination the symbolic creed offered irresistible attractions. It endowed his waking dreams with the value of a philosophy and the force of a gospel. So began, it may be, the misapplication of the doctrine of double vision, whereby double vision was based not on what is presented by the natural world to the bodily eye, but on fantasies which were themselves a mirage of the life of the intellect, and which, by a further process of abstraction, must be re-interpreted by the reader into general terms—vapour passing from the visible state back into the invisible. Blake was conscious of this tendency in himself, and, until it took complete possession of him, lamented it. 'My abstract folly,' he writes in 1801 to Mr. Butts, 'hurries me often away while I am at work, carrying me over mountains and valleys, which are not real, into a land of abstraction where spectres of the dead wander . . . Who shall deliver me from this spirit of abstraction?'

It may well be that the visionary writings will yield a fuller meaning to the investigator when the code of interpretation is discovered. But even if this should be achieved, the force of the objection is not impaired. What can be intelligibly deciphered can be intelligibly expressed so that it needs no deciphering. And if, on the other hand, the vision revealed in the Prophetic Books is a true vision of real things,

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as various and inscrutable in meaning as the world of sense, it must be judged as that world is judged, by its direct appeal, its inherent virtue and beauty. Blake's world of over-laboured giants has no form nor comeliness; it is a nightmare, broken by sudden miracles of spiritual insight, and irradiated by wonderful gleams of tender memory, coming far and faint from that world of sense which, in his later speculations, he despised.

The difficulty of criticizing Blake fairly is increased to the point of desperation by the enormous nature of his claims. He asks to be considered not as a poet, content to rest his fame on the finest of his achievements, but as a prophet, whose vision of things, consistent in all its parts, must be accepted or rejected in its entirety. The reader who feels the fascination and beauty of his work, and is willing to accept the author's own exposition of it, yet cannot avoid misgivings. Blake has not the assured calm of the greatest visionaries. He shows, at times, the most superb indifference to the blindness of those who deny his faith. But this is only one of his moods; at other times he is irritable, captious, rancorous, and vents his annoyance in a fusillade of epigram and satire. Some of this is striking in its grotesque humour and the fierceness of its hostility, as when he consigns his rivals to perdition, and tells how

Death sits laughing on their Monuments,
On which he's written 'Received the Contents.'

But let a prophet beware of satire. He may curse the adver-

INTRODUCTION

saries of his faith; he may not laugh at them. Laughter, when it is employed as a weapon, is an appeal to common sense. All genuine laughter implies or invites sympathy, and refers the question at issue to the tribunal of current opinion. There is something disconcerting and inhuman about the loud and fierce laughter of one who laughs alone. It is the war-cry of defiant and injured vanity, and bears witness to the hurt received. But the seer who lives in the confidence and peace of his own vision is incapable of hurt. He worships at the temple's inner shrine, and takes no part in the noisy contentions of the market-place.

Blake, whose sympathy for children was so wonderfully quick and true, felt but scant sympathy for grown men. He was self-absorbed and self-involved during all his later years. He sought no disciples, and founded no Church, but was content to remain an eccentric, a recluse, and an Ishmaelite. The dreams wherein he saw angels ascending and descending were dreamed in the studio, not under the open sky; and he received no promise that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. His dreams are all that is left of him for our inheritance—dreams often broken and troubled, but illumined, even at their darkest, by those wonders of joy and innocence which were the gift to him of that God whom he had had in his childhood.

WALTER RALEIGH.

EARLY POEMS

(WRITTEN 1769-1784)

*He personifies the seasons. Appeals
to him as persons. This person has
musical quality.*
Bun 1757-1827.

POEMS FROM POETICAL SKETCHES

To Spring

O THOU with dewy locks, who lookest down
Thro' the clear windows of the morning, turn
Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,
Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring!

The hills tell each other, and the list'ning
Valleys hear; all our longing eyes are turned
Up to thy bright pavilions: issue forth,
And let thy holy feet visit our clime.

Come o'er the eastern hills, and let our winds
Kiss thy perfumèd garments; let us taste
Thy morn and evening breath; scatter thy pearls
Upon our love-sick land that mourns for thee.

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour
Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put
Thy golden crown upon her languish'd head,
Whose modest tresses were bound up for thee.

POETICAL SKETCHES

To Summer

O THOU who passest thro' our valleys in
Thy strength, curb thy fierce steeds, allay the heat
That flames from their large nostrils ! thou, O Summer,
Oft pitched'st here thy golden tent, and oft
Beneath our oaks hast slept, while we beheld
With joy thy ruddy limbs and flourishing hair.

Beneath our thickest shades we oft have heard
Thy voice, when noon upon his fervid car
Rode o'er the deep of heaven ; beside our springs
Sit down, and in our mossy valleys, on
Some bank beside a river clear, throw thy
Silk draperies off, and rush into the stream :
Our valleys love the Summer in his pride.

Our bards are fam'd who strike the silver wire :
Our youth are bolder than the southern swains :
Our maidens fairer in the sprightly dance :
We lack not songs, nor instruments of joy,
Nor echoes sweet, nor waters clear as heaven,
Nor laurel wreaths against the sultry heat.

POETICAL SKETCHES

✓ (Appreciation of nature)

Colour

✓ address To autumn

To Autumn

○ AUTUMN, laden with fruit, and stained
With the blood of the grape, pass not, but sit
Beneath my shady roof; there thou may'st rest,
And tune thy jolly voice to my fresh pipe,
And all the daughters of the year shall dance!
Sing now the lusty song of fruits and flowers.

Song.
pois 'The narrow bud opens her beauties to
The sun, and love runs in her thrilling veins;
Blossoms hang round the brows of morning, and
Flourish down the bright cheek of modest eve,
Till clust'ring Summer breaks forth into singing,
And feather'd clouds strew flowers round her head.

'The spirits of the air live on the smells
Of fruit; and joy, with pinions light, roves round
The gardens, or sits singing in the trees.'
Thus sang the jolly Autumn as he sat;
Then rose, girded himself, and o'er the bleak
Hills fled from our sight; but left his golden load.

POETICAL SKETCHES

To Winter

‘O WINTER! bar thine adamantine doors:
The north is thine; there hast thou built thy dark
Deep-founded habitation. Shake not thy roofs,
Nor bend thy pillars with thine iron car.’

He hears me not, but o’er the yawning deep
Rides heavy; his storms are unchain’d, sheathèd
In ribbèd steel; I dare not lift mine eyes,
For he hath rear’d his sceptre o’er the world.

Lo! now the direful monster, whose skin clings
To his strong bones, strides o’er the groaning rocks
He withers all in silence, and in his hand
Unclothes the earth, and freezes up frail life.

He takes his seat upon the cliffs,—the mariner
Cries in vain. Poor little wretch, that deal’st
With storms!—till heaven smiles, and the monster
Is driv’n yelling to his caves beneath mount Hecla.

POETICAL SKETCHES

To the Evening Star

✓
THOU fair-hair'd angel of the evening,
Now, whilst the sun rests on the mountains, light
Thy bright torch of love; thy radiant crown
Put on, and smile upon our evening bed! —
Smile on our loves, and while thou drawest the
Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew
On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes
In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
The lake; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,
And wash the dusk with silver. Soon, full soon,
Dost thou withdraw; then the wolf rages wide,
And the lion glares thro' the dun forest:
The fleeces of our flocks are cover'd with
Thy sacred dew: protect them with thine influence.

To Morning

O HOLY virgin! clad in purest white,
Unlock heav'n's golden gates, and issue forth;
Awake the dawn that sleeps in heaven; let light
Rise from the chambers of the east, and bring
The honeyed dew that cometh on waking day.
O radiant morning, salute the sun
Rous'd like a huntsman to the chace, and with
Thy buskin'd feet appear upon our hills.

Ballad.

Fair Elenor

THE bell struck one, and shook the silent tower;
The graves give up their dead: fair Elenor
Walk'd by the castle gate, and lookèd in.
A hollow groan ran thro' the dreary vaults:

She shriek'd aloud, and sunk upon the steps,
On the cold stone her pale cheeks. Sickly smells
Of death issue as from a sepulchre,
And all is silent but the sighing vaults.

Chill Death withdraws his hand, and she revives;
Amaz'd, she finds herself upon her feet,
And, like a ghost, thro' narrow passages
Walking, feeling the cold walls with her hands.

et - Fancy returns, and now she thinks of bones
And grinning skulls, and corruptible death
Wrapp'd in his shroud; and now fancies she hears
Deep sighs, and sees pale sickly ghosts gliding.

At length, no fancy but reality
Distracts her. A rushing sound, and the feet
Of one that fled, approaches.—Ellen stood
Like a dumb statue, froze to stone with fear.

me
life The wretch approaches, crying: 'The deed is done;
Take this, and send it by whom thou wilt send;
It is my life—send it to Elenor:—
He's dead, and howling after me for blood!

POETICAL SKETCHES

'Take this,' he cried; and thrust into her arms
A wet napkin, wrapp'd about; then rush'd
Past, howling: she receiv'd into her arms
Pale death, and follow'd on the wings of fear.

They pass'd swift thro' the outer gate; the wretch
Howling, leap'd o'er the wall into the moat,
Stifling in mud. Fair Ellen pass'd the bridge,
And heard a gloomy voice cry 'Is it done?' *Duke*

As the deer wounded, Ellen flew over
The pathless plain; as the arrows that fly
By night, destruction flies, and strikes in darkness.
She fled from fear, till at her house arriv'd.

lives - Duke
Her maids await her; on her bed she falls,
That bed of joy, where erst her lord hath press'd:
'Ah, woman's fear!' she cried; 'Ah, cursèd duke!
Ah, my dear lord! ah, wretched Elenor!

'My lord was like a flower upon the brows
Of lusty May! Ah, life as frail as flower!
O ghastly death! withdraw thy cruel hand,
Seek'st thou that flow'r to deck thy horrid temples?

unnatural
My lord was like a star in highest heav'n
Drawn down to earth by spells and wickedness;
My lord was like the opening eyes of day
When western winds creep softly o'er the flowers;

'But he is darken'd; like the summer's noon
Clouded; fall'n like the stately tree, cut down;
The breath of heaven dwelt among his leaves.
O Elenor, weak woman, fill'd with woe!'

POETICAL SKETCHES

Thus having spoke, she raisèd up her head,
And saw the bloody napkin by her side,
Which in her arms she brought; and now, tenfold
More terrified, saw it unfold itself.

Her eyes were fix'd; the bloody cloth unfolds,
Disclosing to her sight the murder'd head
Of her dear lord, all ghastly pale, clotted
With gory blood; it groan'd, and thus it spake:

'O Elenor, I am thy husband's head,
Who, sleeping on the stones of yonder tower,
Was 'reft of life by the accursèd duke!
A hirèd villain turn'd my sleep to death!

'O Elenor, beware the cursèd duke;
O give not him thy hand, now I am dead;
He seeks thy love; who, coward, in the night,
Hirèd a villain to bereave my life.'

She sat with dead cold limbs, stiffen'd to stone;
She took the gory head up in her arms;
She kiss'd the pale lips; she had no tears to shed;
She hugg'd it to her breast, and groan'd her last.

POETICAL SKETCHES

Longing for Love
Singing

Song.

HOW sweet I roam'd from field to field
And tasted all the summer's pride,
Till I the prince of love beheld
Who in the sunny beams did glide!

He show'd me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his gardens fair
Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
And Phoebus fir'd my vocal rage; poetic diction
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me.
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

Love is confining in its influence. Love
is selfish, and enjoys watching the
selfish freedom. Alas! Colver says
"because he was an artist."

POETICAL SKETCHES

Maiden deserted by a lover.

Song

✓
MY silks and fine array,
My smiles and languish'd air,
By love are driv'n away;
And mournful lean Despair
Brings me yew to deck my grave:
Such end true lovers have.

His face is fair as heav'n
When springing buds unfold;
O why to him was't giv'n
Whose heart is wintry cold?
His breast is love's all-worshipp'd tomb,
Where all love's pilgrims come.

Bring me an axe and spade,
Bring me a winding sheet;
When I my grave have made
Let winds and tempests beat:
Then down I'll lie as cold as clay.
True love doth pass away!

POETICAL SKETCHES

Song

LOVE and harmony combine,
And around our souls entwine
While thy branches mix with mine,
And our roots together join.

Joys upon our branches sit,
Chirping loud and singing sweet ;
Like gentle streams beneath our feet
Innocence and virtue meet.

Thou the golden fruit dost bear,
I am clad in flowers fair ;
Thy sweet boughs perfume the air,
And the turtle buildeth there.

There she sits and feeds her young
Sweet I hear her mournful song ;
And thy lovely leaves among,
There is love, I hear her tongue.

There his charming nest doth lay,
There he sleeps the night away ;
There he sports along the day,
And doth among our branches play.

POETICAL SKETCHES

Song

I LOVE the jocund dance,
The softly-breathing song,
Where innocent eyes do glance,
And where lisps the maiden's tongue.

I love the laughing vale,
I love the echoing hill,
Where mirth does never fail,
And the jolly swain laughs his fill.

I love the pleasant cot,
I love the innocent bow'r,
Where white and brown is our lot,
Or fruit in the mid-day hour.

I love the oaken seat,
Beneath the oaken tree,
Where all the old villagers meet,
And laugh our sports to see.

I love our neighbours all,
But, Kitty, I better love thee;
And love them I ever shall;
But thou art all to me.

*Goldsmith's Deserted
Village*

POETICAL SKETCHES

Song

Copy

MEMORY, hither come,
And tune your merry notes ; *as you like it*
And, while upon the wind
Your music floats,
I'll pore upon the stream
Where sighing lovers dream,
And fish for fancies as they pass
Within the watery glass.

*the first of the
first of the
first of the*

I'll drink of the clear stream,
And hear the linnet's song ;
And there I'll lie and dream
The day along :
And when night comes, I'll go
To places fit for woe,
Walking along the darken'd valley - *Milton*
With silent Melancholy.

POETICAL SKETCHES

Mad Song

THE wild winds weep,
And the night is a-cold;
Come hither, Sleep,
And my griefs unfold:
But lo! the morning peeps
Over the eastern steeps,
And the rustling beds of dawn
The earth do scorn.

Lo! to the vault
Of pavèd heaven,
With sorrow fraught
My notes are driven:
They strike the ear of night,
Make weep the eyes of day;
They make mad the roaring winds,
And with tempests play.

Like a fiend in a cloud,
With howling woe
After night I do crowd,
And with night will go;
I turn my back to the east
From whence comforts have increas'd;
For light doth seize my brain
With frantic pain.

POETICAL SKETCHES

Song

FRESH from the dewy hill, the merry year
Smiles on my head and mounts his flaming car;
Round my young brows the laurel wreathes a shade,
And rising glories beam around my head.

My feet are wing'd, while o'er the dewy lawn,
I meet my maiden risen like the morn:
O bless those holy feet, like angels' feet;
O bless those limbs, beaming with heav'nly light.

Like as an angel glitt'ring in the sky
In times of innocence and holy joy;
The joyful shepherd stops his grateful song
To hear the music of an angel's tongue.

So when she speaks, the voice of Heaven I hear;
So when we walk, nothing impure comes near;
Each field seems Eden, and each calm retreat;
Each village seems the haunt of holy feet.

But that sweet village where my black-ey'd maid
Closes her eyes in sleep beneath night's shade,
Whene'er I enter, more than mortal fire
Burns in my soul, and does my song inspire.

POETICAL SKETCHES

Song

WHEN early morn walks forth in sober grey,
Then to my black-ey'd maid I haste away;
When evening sits beneath her dusky bow'r,
And gently sighs away the silent hour,
The village bell alarms, away I go,
And the vale darkens at my pensive woe.

To that sweet village, where my black-ey'd maid
Doth drop a tear beneath the silent shade,
I turn my eyes; and pensive as I go
Curse my black stars and bless my pleasing woe.

Oft when the summer sleeps among the trees,
Whisp'ring faint murmurs to the scanty breeze,
I walk the village round; if at her side
A youth doth walk in stolen joy and pride,
I curse my stars in bitter grief and woe,
That made my love so high and me so low.

O should she e'er prove false, his limbs I'd tear
And throw all pity on the burning air;
I'd curse bright fortune for my mixèd lot,
And then I'd die in peace and be forgot.

Studying poems for literary criticism all these poems are here studied
POETICAL SKETCHES

greek
To the Muses *spirits which inspire poetry*

WHETHER on Ida's shady brow,
Or in the chambers of the East, *between*
The chambers of the sun, that now
From ancient melody have ceas'd;

Whether in Heav'n ye wander fair,
Or the green corners of the earth,
Or the blue regions of the air
Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,
Beneath the bosom of the sea
Wand'ring in many a coral grove,
Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry!

How have you left the ancient love
That bards of old enjoy'd in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move! *Musical instrument*
The sound is forc'd, the notes are few!

*Shakespeare
Milton
Spenser*

description of horrid war.

POETICAL SKETCHES

not just a ballad, but to indicate ^{what} he
thinks those who are responsible for
the war.

Gwin, King of Norway

✓
COME, kings, and listen to my song:
When Gwin, the son of Nore,
Over the nations of the North
His cruel sceptre bore;

The nobles of the land did feed
Upon the hungry poor;
They tear the poor man's lamb, and drive
The needy from their door.

'The land is desolate; our wives
And children cry for bread;
Arise, and pull the tyrant down!
Let Gwin be humbled!'

Gordred the giant rous'd himself
From sleeping in his cave;
He shook the hills, and in the clouds
The troubl'd banners wave.

Beneath them roll'd, like tempests black,
The num'rous sons of blood;
Like lions' whelps, roaring abroad,
Seeking their nightly food.

Down Bleron's hills they dreadful rush,
Their cry ascends the clouds;
The trampling horse and clanging arms
Like rushing mighty floods!

POETICAL SKETCHES

Their wives and children, weeping loud,
Follow in wild array,
Howling like ghosts, furious as wolves
In the bleak wintry day.

‘Pull down the tyrant to the dust,
Let Gwin be humblèd,’
They cry, ‘and let ten thousand lives
Pay for the tyrant’s head.’

From tow’r to tow’r the watchmen cry,
‘O Gwin, the son of Nore,
Arouse thyself! the nations, black
Like clouds, come rolling o’er!’

Gwin rear’d his shield, his palace shakes,
His chiefs come rushing round;
Each, like an awful thunder cloud,
With voice of solemn sound:

Like rearèd stones around a grave
They stand around the King;
Then suddenly each seiz’d his spear,
And clashing steel does ring.

man
The husbandman does leave his plough
To wade thro’ fields of gore;
The merchant binds his brows in steel,
And leaves the trading shore;

The shepherd leaves his mellow pipe,
And sounds the trumpet shrill;
The workman throws his hammer down
To heave the bloody bill.

POETICAL SKETCHES

Like the tall ghost of Barraton
Who sports in stormy sky,
Gwin leads his host, as black as night
When pestilence does fly,

With horses and with chariots—
And all his spearmen bold
March to the sound of mournful song,
Like clouds around him roll'd.

Gwin lifts his hand—the nations halt;
'Prepare for war!' he cries—
Gordred appears!—his frowning brow
Troubles our northern skies.

The armies stand, like balances
Held in th' Almighty's hand;—
'Gwin, thou hast fill'd thy measure up:
'Thou'rt swept from out the land.'

wow And now the raging armies rush'd
Like warring mighty seas;
The heav'ns are shook with roaring war,
The dust ascends the skies!

Earth smokes with blood, and groans and shakes
To drink her children's gore,
A sea of blood; nor can the eye
See to the trembling shore!

And on the verge of this wild sea
Famine and death doth cry;
The cries of women and of babes
Over the field doth fly.

POETICAL SKETCHES

The King is seen raging afar,
With all his men of might;
Like blazing comets scattering death
Thro' the red fev'rous night.

Beneath his arm like sheep they die,
And groan upon the plain;
The battle faints, and bloody men
Fight upon hills of slain.

Now death is sick, and riven men
Labour and toil for life;
Steed rolls on steed, and shield on shield,
Sunk in this sea of strife!

The god of war is drunk with blood;
The earth doth faint and fail;
The stench of blood makes sick the heav'ns;
Ghosts glut the throat of hell!

{ O what have kings to answer for
Before that awful throne;
When thousand deaths for vengeance cry,
And ghosts accusing groan!

Like blazing comets in the sky
That shake the stars of light,
Which drop like fruit unto the earth
Thro' the fierce burning night;

Like these did Gwin and Gordred meet,
And the first blow decides;
Down from the brow unto the breast
Gordred his head divides!

POETICAL SKETCHES

Gwin fell : the sons of Norway fled,
All that remain'd alive ;
The rest did fill the vale of death,
For them the eagles strive.

The river Dorman roll'd their blood
Into the northern sea ;
Who mourn'd his sons, and overwhelm'd
The pleasant south country.

POETICAL SKETCHES

✓ *A War Song to Englishmen*

PREPARE, prepare the iron helm of war,
Bring forth the lots, cast in the spacious orb;
Th' Angel of Fate turns them with mighty hands,
And casts them out upon the darken'd earth!

Prepare, prepare.

Prepare your hearts for Death's cold hand! prepare
Your souls for flight, your bodies for the earth;
Prepare your arms for glorious victory!
Prepare your eyes to meet a holy God!

Prepare, prepare.

Whose fatal scroll is that? Methinks 'tis mine!
Why sinks my heart, why faltereth my tongue?
Had I three lives, I'd die in such a cause,
And rise, with ghosts, over the well-fought field.

Prepare, prepare.

The arrows of Almighty God are drawn!
Angels of Death stand in the low'ring heavens!
Thousands of souls must seek the realms of light,
And walk together on the clouds of heaven!

Prepare, prepare.

Soldiers, prepare! Our cause is Heaven's cause;
Soldiers, prepare! Be worthy of our cause:
Prepare to meet our fathers in the sky:
Prepare, O troops, that are to fall to-day!

Prepare, prepare.

POETICAL SKETCHES

ish
ory
Alfred shall smile, and make his harp rejoice ;
The Norman William, and the learnèd Clerk,
And Lion Heart, and black-brow'd Edward, with
His loyal queen shall rise, and welcome us !

Prepare, prepare.

POETICAL SKETCHES

*Song by a Shepherd*¹

WELCOME, stranger, to this place,
Where joy doth sit on every bough,
Paleness flies from every face ;
We reap not what we do not sow.

Innocence doth like a rose
Bloom on every maiden's cheek ;
Honour twines around her brows,
The jewel health adorns her neck.

Song by an Old Shepherd

WHEN silver snow decks Sylvia's clothes,
And jewel hangs at shepherd's nose,
We can abide life's pelting storm,
That makes our limbs quake, if our hearts be warm.

Whilst Virtue is our walking-staff,
And Truth a lantern to our path,
We can abide life's pelting storm,
That makes our limbs quake, if our hearts be warm.

Blow, boisterous wind, stern winter frown,
Innocence is a winter's gown.
So clad, we'll abide life's pelting storm,
That makes our limbs quake, if our hearts be warm.

¹ This and the following song are written in Blake's autograph on the flyleaves of a copy of the *Poetical Sketches* (1783).

FROM 'AN ISLAND IN THE MOON'

The Song of Phebe and Jellicoe

PHEBE drest like beauty's queen,
Jellicoe in faint pea-green,
Sitting all beneath a grot,
Where the little lambkins trot.

Maidens dancing, loves a-sporting,
All the country folks a-courting,
Susan, Johnny, Bob, and Joe,
Lightly tripping on a row.

Happy people, who can be
In happiness compar'd with ye?
The pilgrim with his crook and hat
Sees your happiness compleat.

AN ISLAND IN THE MOON

This City and this Country

THIS city and this country has brought forth many
mayors
To sit in state, and give forth laws out of their old oak
chairs,
With face as brown as any nut with drinking of strong
ale—
Good English hospitality, O then it did not fail!

With scarlet gowns and broad gold lace, would make
a yeoman sweat;
With stockings roll'd above their knees and shoes as
black as jet;
With eating beef and drinking beer, O they were stout
and hale—
Good English hospitality, O then it did not fail!

Thus sitting at the table wide the mayor and aldermen
Were fit to give law to the city; each eat as much as
ten :
The hungry poor enter'd the hall to eat good beef and
ale—
Good English hospitality, O then it did not fail!

AN ISLAND IN THE MOON

Leave, O leave me to my Sorrows

LEAVE, O leave me to my sorrows;
Here I'll sit and fade away,
Till I'm nothing but a spirit,
And I lose this form of clay.

Then if chance along this forest
Any walk in pathless ways,
Thro' the gloom he'll see my shadow,
Hear my voice upon the breeze.

SONGS
OF INNOCENCE
AND
OF EXPERIENCE

(ENGRAVED 1789-1794)

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Introduction

✓
Flute -
ending for
using in a
actual way
Piper.
PIPING down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

happiness &
gaily

Pipe a song about a Lamb!'
So I piped with merry cheer.
'Piper, pipe that song again;'
So I piped: he wept to hear.

Sung
'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer:.'
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

wrote
'Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read.'
So he vanish'd from my sight,
And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

33
Poems are going to be very simple, & happy &
deal with nature

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

The Echoing Green

THE Sun does arise,
And make happy the skies;
The merry bells ring
To welcome the Spring;
The skylark and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around
To the bells' cheerful sound,
While our sports shall be seen
On the Echoing Green.

Old John, with white hair,
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say:
'Such, such were the joys
When we all, girls and boys,
In our youth time were seen
On the Echoing Green.'

Till the little ones, weary,
No more can be merry;
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Round the laps of their mothers
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest,
And sport no more seen
On the darkening Green.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Innocence, lamb, child and nearness
to Christ.

The Lamb

LITTLE Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is callèd by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are callèd by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

Lamb rep child

Mypis rep adult

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

The Shepherd

HOW sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot !
From the morn to the evening he strays ;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be fillèd with praise.

For he hears the lamb's innocent call,
And he hears the ewe's tender reply ;
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

Infant Joy

' I HAVE no name :
I am but two days old.'
What shall I call thee ?
' I happy am,
Joy is my name.'
Sweet joy befall thee !

Pretty joy !
Sweet joy, but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee :
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee !

ed in Br. Empire. Describing here a very
small thing that children love to be long
SONGS OF INNOCENCE

The Little Black Boy

MY mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And, pointing to the east, began to say :

‘Look on the rising sun,—there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

‘And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

‘For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear His voice,
Saying: “Come out from the grove, My love and care,
And round My golden tent like lambs rejoice.”’

Thus did my mother say, and kissèd me;
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black, and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Laughing Song

WHEN the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by :
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it ;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing 'Ha, Ha, He !'

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread,
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of 'Ha, Ha, He !'

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Spring

SOUND the flute !
Now it's mute.
Birds delight
Day and night ;
Nightingale
In the dale,
Lark in sky,
Merrily,
Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.

Little boy,
Full of joy ;
Little girl,
Sweet and small ;
Cock does crow,
So do you ;
Merry voice,
Infant noise,
Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.

Little lamb,
Here I am ;
Come and lick
My white neck ;
Let me pull
Your soft wool ;
Let me kiss
Your soft face :
Merrily, merrily, we welcome in the year.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

A Cradle Song

SWEET dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head;
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams.

Sweet sleep, with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep, Angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child.

Sweet smiles, in the night
Hover over my delight;
Sweet smiles, mother's smiles,
All the livelong night beguiles.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes.
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.

Sleep, sleep, happy child,
All creation slept and smil'd;
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe, once like thee,
Thy Maker lay and wept for me.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When He was an infant small.
Thou His image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee,

Smiles on thee, on me, on all;
Who became an infant small.
Infant smiles are His own smiles;
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Nurse's Song

WHEN the voices of children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still.

‘Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies.’

‘No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all cover’d with sheep.’

‘Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,
And then go home to bed.’
The little ones leapèd and shoutèd and laugh’d
And all the hills echoèd.

✓

Holy Thursday

'TWAS on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces
clean,
The children walking two and two, in red and blue
and green,
Grey-headed beadles walk'd before, with wands as white
as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like 'Thames'
waters flow. *St Paul's Cathedral*

O what a multitude they seem'd, these flowers of London
town!
Seated in companies, they sit with radiance all their
own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of
lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent
hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to Heaven the voice
of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven
among.
Beneath them sit the agèd men, wise guardians of the
poor;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your
door.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

The Blossom

MERRY, merry sparrow !
Under leaves so green,
A happy blossom
Sees you, swift as arrow,
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my bosom.

Pretty, pretty robin !
Under leaves so green,
A happy blossom
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,
Pretty, pretty robin,
Near my bosom.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

having bright side of it. - Happy future in
your duty no *The Chimney Sweeper*
then how unhappy it is

WHEN my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!'
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shav'd: so I said
'Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.'

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!—
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned and Jack,
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

The Divine Image

TO Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our Father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is man, His child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

{ And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Vision of Future

Night

THE sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine ;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.
The moon, like a flower,
In heaven's high bower,
With silent delight
Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy groves,
Where flocks have took delight.
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
The feet of angels bright ;
Unseen they pour blessing,
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.

Angels
They look in every thoughtless nest,
Where birds are cover'd warm ;
They visit caves of every beast,
To keep them all from harm.
If they see any weeping
That should have been sleeping,
They pour sleep on their head,
And sit down by their bed.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep.
But if they rush dreadful,
The angels, most heedful,
Receive each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.

h) *Revelations*

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
Shall flow with tears of gold,
And pitying the tender cries,
And walking round the fold,
Saying 'Wrath, by his meekness,
And, by his health, sickness
Is driven away
From our immortal day.

'And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
I can lie down and sleep;
Or think on Him who bore thy name,
Graze after thee and weep.
For, wash'd in life's river,
My bright mane for ever
Shall shine like the gold
As I guard o'er the fold.'

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

A Dream

ONCE a dream did weave a shade
O'er my Angel-guarded bed,
That an emmet lost its way
Where on grass methought I lay.

Troubled, 'wilder'd, and forlorn,
Dark, benighted, travel-worn,
Over many a tangled spray,
All heart-broke I heard her say:

'O, my children! do they cry?
Do they hear their father sigh?
Now they look abroad to see:
Now return and weep for me.'

Pitying, I dropp'd a tear;
But I saw a glow-worm near,
Who replied: 'What wailing wight
Calls the watchman of the night?

'I am set to light the ground,
While the beetle goes his round:
Follow now the beetle's hum;
Little wanderer, hie thee home.'

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

✓
series of
questions

On Another's Sorrow

CAN I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrow's share?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow fill'd?

Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear?
{ No, no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

And can He who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small,
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear,

And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in their breast;
And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant's tear;

And not sit both night and day,
Wiping all our tears away?
O, no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

He doth give His joy to all ;
He becomes an infant small ;
He becomes a man of woe ;
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by ;
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

O ! He gives to us His joy
That our grief He may destroy ;
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

The Little Boy Lost

‘FATHER! father! where are you going?
O do not walk so fast.
Speak, father, speak to your little boy,
Or else I shall be lost.’

The night was dark, no father was there;
The child was wet with dew;
The mire was deep, and the child did weep,
And away the vapour flew.

The Little Boy Found

THE little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wand’ring light,
Began to cry; but God, ever nigh,
Appear’d like his father, in white.

He kissèd the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, thro’ the lonely dale,
Her little boy weeping sought.

Grief.

1294

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Introduction

HEAR the voice of the bard !
Who present, past, and future, sees ;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word
That walk'd among the ancient trees,

Calling the lapsèd soul,
And weeping in the evening dew ;
That might control
The starry pole,
And fallen fallen light renew !

'O Earth, O Earth, return !
Arise from out the dewy grass ;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

'Turn away no more ;
Why wilt thou turn away ?
The starry floor,
The wat'ry shore,
Is giv'n thee till the break of day.'

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Earth's Answer

EARTH rais'd up her head
From the darkness dread and drear.
Her light fled,
Stony dread!
And her locks cover'd with grey despair.

'Prison'd on wat'ry shore,
Starry Jealousy does keep my den:
Cold and hoar,
Weeping o'er
I hear the father of the ancient men.

'Selfish father of men!
Cruel, jealous, selfish fear!
Can delight,
Chain'd in night,
The virgins of youth and morning bear?

'Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower
Sow by night,
Or the plowman in darkness plow?

'Break this heavy chain
That does freeze my bones around.
Selfish! vain!
Eternal bane!
That free Love with bondage bound.'

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Nurse's Song

WHEN the voices of children are heard on the green
And whisp'rings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Fly

LITTLE Fly
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brush'd away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance,
And drink, and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life
And strength and breath,
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly,
If I live
Or if I die.

greatest poem of Blake.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Symbol of Innocence - Lamb
Cruel - Tiger
The Tiger

TIGER! Tiger! burning bright *living*
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

*Have the power
ator had
igs which
fied him
the
where
the parts
the tiger*
In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?
And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

angels
When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Little Girl Lost

IN futurity
I prophetic see
That the earth from sleep
(Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise and seek
For her Maker meek;
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

In the southern clime,
Where the summer's prime
Never fades away,
Lovely Lyca lay.

Seven summers old
Lovely Lyca told;
She had wander'd long
Hearing wild birds' song.

'Sweet sleep, come to me
Underneath this tree.
Do father, mother, weep?
Where can Lyca sleep?

'Lost in desert wild
Is your little child.
How can Lyca sleep
If her mother weep?

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

'If her heart does ache
Then let Lyca wake;
If my mother sleep,
Lyca shall not weep.

'Frowning, frowning night
O'er this desert bright,
Let thy moon arise
While I close my eyes.'

Sleeping Lyca lay
While the beasts of prey,
Come from caverns deep,
View'd the maid asleep.

The kingly lion stood,
And the virgin view'd,
Then he gamboll'd round
O'er the hallow'd ground.

Leopards, tigers, play
Round her as she lay,
While the lion old
Bow'd his mane of gold.

And her bosom lick,
And upon her neck
From his eyes of flame
Ruby tears there came;

While the lioness
Loos'd her slender dress,
And naked they convey'd
To caves the sleeping maid.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Little Girl Found

ALL the night in woe
Lyca's parents go
Over valleys deep,
While the deserts weep.

Tired and woe-begone,
Hoarse with making moan,
Arm in arm seven days
They trac'd the desert ways.

Seven nights they sleep
Among shadows deep,
And dream they see their child
Starv'd in desert wild.

Pale, thro' pathless ways
The fancied image strays
Famish'd, weeping, weak,
With hollow piteous shriek.

Rising from unrest,
The trembling woman prest
With feet of weary woe:
She could no further go.

In his arms he bore
Her, arm'd with sorrow sore;
Till before their way
A couching lion lay.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Turning back was vain ;
Soon his heavy mane
Bore them to the ground.
Then he stalk'd around,

Smelling to his prey ;
But their fears allay
When he licks their hands,
And silent by them stands.

They look upon his eyes
Fill'd with deep surprise ;
And wondering behold
A spirit arm'd in gold.

On his head a crown ;
On his shoulders down
Flow'd his golden hair.
Gone was all their care.

'Follow me,' he said,
'Weep not for the maid ;
In my palace deep
Lyca lies asleep.'

Then they followèd
Where the vision led,
And saw their sleeping child
Among tigers wild.

To this day they dwell
In a lonely dell ;
Nor fear the wolvis howl
Nor the lions' growl.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

*Two kinds of Love .
Selfish + Unselfish .*

✓ *The Clod and the Pebble*

unselfish 'LOVE seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.'

So sung a little clod of clay,
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet: *ajot*

selfish. 'Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.'

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Little Vagabond

DEAR mother, dear mother, the church is cold,
But the ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm;
Besides I can tell where I am used well,
Such usage in Heaven will never do well.

But if at the church they would give us some ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,
Nor ever once wish from the church to stray.

Then the parson might preach, and drink, and sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;
And modest dame Lurch, who is always at church,
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, nor birch.

And God, like a father, rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as He,
Would have no more quarrel with the devil or the barrel,
But kiss him, and give him both drink and apparel.

Black's time were no private state
schools.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Holy Thursday

✓
[S this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduc'd to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand? *greedy.*

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak and bare,
And their ways are fill'd with thorns:
It is eternal winter there.

For where'er the sun does shine,
And where'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appal.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

✓ *Christian Fehreman*
A Poison Tree

I WAS angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunnèd it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

*greenish
slight.*

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Angel

I DREAMT a dream! what can it mean?
And that I was a maiden Queen,
Guarded by an Angel mild:
Witless woe was ne'er beguil'd!

And I wept both night and day,
And he wip'd my tears away,
And I wept both day and night,
And hid from him my heart's delight.

So he took his wings and fled;
Then the morn blush'd rosy red;
I dried my tears, and arm'd my fears
With ten thousand shields and spears.

Soon my Angel came again:
I was arm'd, he came in vain;
For the time of youth was fled,
And grey hairs were on my head.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Sick Rose

O ROSE, thou art sick!
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy;
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

To Tirzah

WHATE'ER is born of mortal birth
Must be consumèd with the earth,
To rise from generation free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

The sexes sprung from shame and pride
Blow'd in the morn; in evening died;
But Mercy chang'd death into sleep;
The sexes rose to work and weep.

Thou mother of my mortal part
With cruelty didst mould my heart,
And with false self-deceiving tears
Didst bind my nostrils, eyes, and ears;

Didst close my tongue in senseless clay,
And me to mortal life betray:
The death of Jesus set me free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Voice of the Ancient Bard

YOUTH of delight, come hither,
And see the opening morn,
Image of truth new-born.
Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason,
Dark disputes and artful teasing.
Folly is an endless maze,
Tangled roots perplex her ways.
How many have fallen there!
They stumble all night over bones of the dead,
And feel they know not what but care,
And wish to lead others, when they should be led.

My Pretty Rose-Tree

A FLOWER was offer'd to me,
Such a flower as May never bore;
But I said 'I've a pretty rose-tree,'
And I passèd the sweet flower o'er.

Then I went to my pretty rose-tree,
To tend her by day and by night,
But my rose turn'd away with jealousy,
And her thorns were my only delight.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Ah ! Sun-Flower

AH, sun-flower ! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun ;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime,
Where the traveller's journey is done ;

Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my sun-flower wishes to go.

The Lily

THE modest rose puts forth a thorn,
The humble sheep a threat'ning horn ;
While the lily white shall in love delight,
Nor a thorn, nor a threat, stain her beauty bright.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Garden of Love

I WENT to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this chapel were shut,
And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;

And I saw it was fillèd with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briers my joys and desires.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

A Little Boy Lost

‘**N**OUGHT loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to Thought
A greater than itself to know :

‘And, Father, how can I love you
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.’

The priest sat by and heard the child,
In trembling zeal he seiz’d his hair :
He led him by his little coat,
And all admir’d the priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,
‘Lo ! what a fiend is here,’ said he,
‘One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy Mystery.’

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain ;
They stripp’d him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain ;

And burn’d him in a holy place,
Where many had been burn’d before :
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion’s shore ?

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Infant Sorrow

MY mother groan'd, my father wept,
Into the dangerous world I leapt;
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling-bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
'To sulk upon my mother's breast.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Schoolboy

I LOVE to rise in a summer morn
When the birds sing on every tree ;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the skylark sings with me.
O ! what sweet company.

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O ! it drives all joy away ;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

Ah ! then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour,
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn thro' with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing ?
How can a child, when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring ?

O ! father and mother, if buds are nipp'd
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are stripp'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay,

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear?

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

London

I WANDER thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning church appals;
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

A Little Girl Lost

*Children of the future age,
Reading this indignant page,
Know that in a former time,
Love, sweet Love, was thought a crime !*

In the Age of Gold,
Free from winter's cold,
Youth and maiden bright
To the holy light,
Naked in the sunny beams delight.

Once a youthful pair,
Fill'd with softest care,
Met in garden bright
Where the holy light
Had just remov'd the curtains of the night.

There, in rising day,
On the grass they play :
Parents were afar,
Strangers came not near,
And the maiden soon forgot her fear.

Tired with kisses sweet,
They agree to meet
When the silent sleep
Waves o'er heaven's deep,
And the weary tired wanderers weep.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

To her father white
Came the maiden bright;
But his loving look,
Like the holy book,
All her tender limbs with terror shook.

‘Ona! pale and weak!
To thy father speak:
O! the trembling fear,
O! the dismal care,
That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair!’

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

charge laid against church &
state as well as father & mother.

The Chimney-sweeper

A LITTLE black thing among the snow,
Crying 'weep! 'weep!' in notes of woe!
'Where are thy father and mother, say?'—
'They are both gone up to the church to pray.

'Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow,
from They clothèd me in the clothes of death,
at And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

'And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and his priest and king,
Who make up a heaven of our misery.'

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

The Human Abstract

PITY would be no more
If we did not make somebody poor;
And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings peace,
Till the selfish loves increase;
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears;
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the caterpillar and fly
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought through Nature to find this tree;
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the human brain.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

*A Divine Image*¹

C RUELTY has a human heart,
And Jealousy a human face;
Terror the human form divine,
And Secrecy the human dress.

The human dress is forgèd iron,
The human form a fiery forge,
The human face a furnace seal'd,
The human heart its hungry gorge.

¹ Written and engraved by Blake, but not included in any authentic copy of the Songs.

POEMS FROM THE
ROSSETTI MS.

(CIRCA 1793-1811)

(COMMONLY KNOWN AS 'THE MANUSCRIPT BOOK')

Love that never told can be
For the gentle mind does move
Silently, invisibly.

POEMS FROM THE MS. BOOK

I told my Love

(1)

I TOLD my love, I told my love,
I told her all my heart;
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears,
Ah! she doth depart.

Soon as she was gone from me,
A traveller came by,
Silently, invisibly—

O! was no deny. *Couldnt deny him.*
He took her with a sigh.

I laid me down upon a Bank

I LAID me down upon a bank,
Where love lay sleeping;
I heard among the rushes dank
Weeping, weeping.

Then I went to the heath and the wild,
To the thistles and thorns of the waste;
And they told me how they were beguil'd,
Driven out, and compell'd to be chaste.

I saw a Chapel all of Gold

I SAW a chapel all of gold
That none did dare to enter in,
And many weeping stood without,
Weeping, mourning, worshipping.

I saw a serpent rise between
The white pillars of the door,
And he forc'd and forc'd and forc'd;
Down the golden hinges tore,

And along the pavement sweet,
Set with pearls and rubies bright,
All his shining length he drew,
Till upon the altar white

Vomiting his poison out
On the bread and on the wine.
So I turn'd into a sty,
And laid me down among the swine.

I asked a Thief

I ASKÈD a thief to steal me a peach :
 He turnèd up his eyes.
I ask'd a lithe lady to lie her down :
 Holy and meek, she cries.

As soon as I went an angel came :
 He wink'd at the thief,
And smil'd at the dame ;

And without one word said
 Had a peach from the tree,
And still as a maid
 Enjoy'd the lady.

ROSSETTI MS.

as music I
the Angel &
devil
The Two Songs
I heard an Angel singing

I HEARD an Angel singing *Down*
When the day was springing:
'Mercy, Pity, Peace
Is the world's release.'

Thus he sang all day
Over the new-mown hay,
Till the sun went down,
And haycocks lookèd brown.

I heard a Devil curse *- light fades, cold*
Over the heath and the furze:
'Mercy could be no more
If there was nobody poor,

'And pity no more could be,
If all were as happy as we.'
At his curse the sun went down,
And the heavens gave a frown.

A Cradle Song

SLEEP! sleep! beauty bright,
Dreaming o'er the joys of night;
Sleep! sleep! in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet Babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel,
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart does rest.

O! the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep.
When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break,

From thy cheek and from thy eye,
O'er the youthful harvests nigh.
Infant wiles and infant smiles
Heaven and Earth of peace beguiles.

Silent, silent Night

SILENT, silent Night,
Quench the holy light
Of thy torches bright;

For possess'd of Day,
Thousand spirits stray
That sweet joys betray.

Why should joys be sweet
Usèd with deceit,
Nor with sorrows meet?

But an honest joy
Does itself destroy
For a harlot coy.

I fear'd the fury of my wind

I FEAR'D the fury of my wind
Would blight all blossoms fair and true;
And my sun it shin'd and shin'd,
And my wind it never blew.

But a blossom fair or true
Was not found on any tree;
For all blossoms grew and grew
Fruitless, false, though fair to see.

Infant Sorrow

MY mother groan'd, my father wept ;
Into the dangerous world I leapt,
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling-bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.

When I saw that rage was vain,
And to sulk would nothing gain,
Turning many a trick and wile
I began to soothe and smile.

And I sooth'd day after day,
Till upon the ground I stray ;
And I smil'd night after night,
Seeking only for delight.

And I saw before me shine
Clusters of the wand'ring vine ;
And, beyond, a myrtle-tree
Stretch'd its blossoms out to me.

But a priest with holy look,
In his hands a holy book,
Pronouncèd curses on his head
Who the fruits or blossoms shed.

ROSSETTI MS.

I beheld the priest by night;
He embrac'd my myrtle bright:
I beheld the priest by day,
Where beneath my vines he lay.

Like a serpent in the day
Underneath my vines he lay:
Like a serpent in the night
He embrac'd my myrtle bright.

So I smote him, and his gore
Stain'd the roots my myrtle bore;
But the time of youth is fled,
And grey hairs are on my head.

Why should I care for the men of Thames

WHY should I care for the men of Thames,
Or the cheating waves of charter'd streams;
Or shrink at the little blasts of fear
That the hireling blows into my ear?

Though born on the cheating banks of Thames,
Though his waters bathèd my infant limbs,
The Ohio shall wash his stains from me:
I was born a slave, but I go to be free.

Thou hast a lap full of seed

THOU hast a lap full of seed,
And this is a fine country.
Why dost thou not cast thy seed,
And live in it merrily?

Shall I cast it on the sand
And turn it into fruitful land?
For on no other ground
Can I sow my seed,
Without tearing up
Some stinking weed.

To My Myrtle

TO a lovely myrtle bound,
 Blossoms show'ring all around,
O how sick and weary I
Underneath my myrtle lie!
Why should I be bound to thee,
O my lovely myrtle-tree?

Are not the joys of morning sweeter

ARE not the joys of morning sweeter
 Than the joys of night?
And are the vigorous joys of youth
 Ashamèd of the light?

Let age and sickness silent rob
 The vineyards in the night;
But those who burn with vigorous youth
 Pluck fruits before the light.

The Wild Flower's Song

AS I wander'd the forest,
The green leaves among,
I heard a wild flower
Singing a song.

'I slept in the earth
In the silent night,
I murmur'd my fears
And I felt delight.

'In the morning I went,
As rosy as morn,
To seek for new joy;
But I met with scorn.'

Day

THE sun arises in the East,
Cloth'd in robes of blood and gold;
Swords and spears and wrath increas'd
All around his bosom roll'd,
Crown'd with warlike fires and raging desires.

The Fairy

‘COME hither, my sparrows,
My little arrows.
If a tear or a smile
Will a man beguile,
If an amorous delay
Clouds a sunshiny day,
If the step of a foot
Smites the heart to its root,
’Tis the marriage-ring—
Makes each fairy a king.’

So a fairy sung.
From the leaves I sprung;
He leap’d from the spray
To flee away;
But in my hat caught,
He soon shall be taught.
Let him laugh, let him cry,
He’s my butterfly;
For I’ve pulled out the sting
Of the marriage-ring.

[*Lafayette*]

‘LET the brothels of Paris be openèd
With many an alluring dance,
To awake the physicians thro’ the city’
Said the beautiful Queen of France.

The King awoke on his couch of gold,
As soon as he heard these tidings told :
‘Arise and come, both fife and drum,
And the famine shall eat both crust and crumb.’

The Queen of France just touch’d this globe,
And the pestilence darted from her robe ;
But our good Queen quite grows to the ground,
And a great many suckers grow all around.

Fayette beside King Lewis stood ;
He saw him sign his hand ;
And soon he saw the famine rage
About the fruitful land.

Fayette beheld the Queen to smile
And wink her lovely eye ;
And soon he saw the pestilence
From street to street to fly.

Fayette beheld the King and Queen
In tears and iron bound ;
But mute Fayette wept tear for tear,
And guarded them around.

ROSSETTI MS.

Fayette, Fayette, thou'rt bought and sold
And sold is thy happy morrow;
Thou gavest the tears of pity away
In exchange for the tears of sorrow.

Will the mother exchange her new-born babe
For the dog at the wintry door?
Yet thou dost exchange thy pitying tears
For the links of a dungeon-floor!

My Spectre around me night and day

MY Spectre around me night and day
Like a wild beast guards my way ;
My Emanation far within
Weeps incessantly for my sin.

A fathomless and boundless deep,
There we wander, there we weep ;
On the hungry craving wind
My Spectre follows thee behind.

He scents thy footsteps in the snow,
Wheresoever thou dost go,
Through the wintry hail and rain.
When wilt thou return again ?

Dost thou not in pride and scorn
Fill with tempests all my morn,
And with jealousies and fears
Fill my pleasant nights with tears ?

Seven of my sweet loves thy knife
Has bereavèd of their life.
Their marble tombs I built with tears,
And with cold and shuddering fears.

Seven more loves weep night and day
Round the tombs where my loves lay,
And seven more loves attend each night
Around my couch with torches bright.

ROSSETTI MS.

And seven more loves in my bed
Crown with wine my mournful head,
Pitying and forgiving all
Thy transgressions great and small.

When wilt thou return and view
My loves, and them to life renew?
When wilt thou return and live?
When wilt thou pity as I forgive?

‘Never, never, I return :
Still for victory I burn.
Living, thee alone I’ll have ;
And when dead I’ll be thy grave.

‘Thro’ the Heaven and Earth and Hell
Thou shalt never, never quell :
I will fly and thou pursue :
Night and morn the flight renew.’

Till I turn from female love
And root up the infernal grove,
I shall never worthy be
To step into eternity.

And, to end thy cruel mocks,
Annihilate thee on the rocks,
And another form create
To be subservient to my fate.

Let us agree to give up love,
And root up the infernal grove ;
Then shall we return and see
The worlds of happy eternity.

ROSSETTI MS.

And throughout all eternity
I forgive you, you forgive me.
As our dear Redeemer said :
'This the Wine, and this the Bread.'

Mock on, mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau

M OCK on, mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau;
Mock on, mock on; 'tis all in vain!
You throw the sand against the wind,
And the wind blows it back again.

And every sand becomes a gem
Reflected in the beams divine;
Blown back they blind the mocking eye,
But still in Israel's paths they shine.

The Atoms of Democritus
And Newton's Particles of Light
Are sands upon the Red Sea shore,
Where Israel's tents do shine so bright.

Morning

TO find the Western path,
Right thro' the Gates of Wrath
I urge my way;
Sweet Mercy leads me on
With soft repentant moan:
I see the break of day.

The war of swords and spears,
Melted by dewy tears,
Exhales on high;
The Sun is freed from fears,
And with soft grateful tears
Ascends the sky.

The Birds

He. WHERE thou dwellest, in what grove,
Tell me, fair one, tell me, love;
Where thou thy charming nest dost build,
O thou pride of every field!

She. Yonder stands a lonely tree,
There I live and mourn for thee;
Morning drinks my silent tear,
And evening winds my sorrow bear.

He. O thou summer's harmony,
I have liv'd and mourn'd for thee;
Each day I mourn along the wood,
And night hath heard my sorrows loud.

She. Dost thou truly long for me?
And am I thus sweet to thee?
Sorrow now is at an end,
O my lover and my friend!

He. Come, on wings of joy we'll fly
To where my bower hangs on high;
Come, and make thy calm retreat
Among green leaves and blossoms sweet.

You don't believe

YOU don't believe—I won't attempt to make ye:
You are asleep—I won't attempt to wake ye.
Sleep on! sleep on! while in your pleasant dreams
Of Reason you may drink of Life's clear streams.
Reason and Newton, they are quite two things;
For so the swallow and the sparrow sings.

Reason says 'Miracle': Newton says 'Doubt.'
Aye! that's the way to make all Nature out.
'Doubt, doubt, and don't believe without experiment':
That is the very thing that Jesus meant,
When He said 'Only believe! believe and try!
Try, try, and never mind the reason why!'

Why was Cupid a boy

WHY was Cupid a boy,
And why a boy was he?
He should have been a girl,
For aught that I can see.

For he shoots with his bow,
And the girl shoots with her eye,
And they both are merry and glad,
And laugh when we do cry.

Then to make Cupid a boy
Was surely a woman's plan,
For a boy ne'er learns so much
Till he is become a man.

And then he's so pierc'd with cares,
And wounded with arrowy smarts,
That the whole business of his life
Is to pick out the heads of the darts.

'Twas the Greeks' love of war
Turn'd love into a boy,
And woman into a statue of stone—
And away fled every joy.

The Caverns of the Grave I've seen

THE Caverns of the Grave I've seen,
 And these I show'd to England's Queen.
 But now the Caves of Hell I view,
 Who shall I dare to show them to?
 What mighty soul in Beauty's form
 Shall dauntless view the infernal storm?
 Egremont's Countess can control
 The flames of Hell that round me roll;
 If she refuse, I still go on
 Till the Heavens and Earth are gone,
 Still admir'd by noble minds,
 Follow'd by Envy on the winds,
 Re-engrav'd time after time,
 Ever in their youthful prime,
 My designs unchang'd remain.
 Time may rage, but rage in vain.
 For above Time's troubled fountains,
 On the great Atlantic Mountains,
 In my Golden House on high,
 There they shine eternally.

Read

I rose up at the dawn of day

I ROSE up at the dawn of day—
 ‘Get thee away! get thee away!
 Pray’st thou for riches? away! away!
 This is the Throne of Mammon grey.’

Said I: This, sure, is very odd;
 I took it to be the Throne of God.
 For everything besides I have:
 It is only for riches that I can crave.

I have mental joy, and mental health,
 And mental friends, and mental wealth;
 I’ve a wife I love, and that loves me;
 I’ve all but riches bodily.

I am in God’s presence night and day,
 And He never turns His face away;
 The accuser of sins by my side doth stand,
 And he holds my money-bag in his hand.

For my worldly things God makes him pay,
 And he’d pay for more if to him I would pray;
 And so you may do the worst you can do;
 Be assur’d, Mr. Devil, I won’t pray to you.

ROSSETTI MS.

Then if for riches I must not pray,
God knows, I little of prayers need say;
So, as a church is known by its steeple,
If I pray it must be for other people.

He says, if I do not worship him for a God,
I shall eat coarser food, and go worse shod;
So, as I don't value such things as these,
You must do, Mr. Devil, just as God please.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

BEING FRAGMENTS OF AN UNCOMPLETED
POEM WRITTEN CIRCA 1810

α

THE Vision of Christ that thou dost see
Is my vision's greatest enemy.
Thine has a great hook nose like thine;
Mine has a snub nose like to mine.
Thine is the friend of all mankind;
Mine speaks in parables to the blind.
Thine loves the same world that mine hates;
Thy heaven doors are my hell gates.
Socrates taught what Meletus
Loath'd as a nation's bitterest curse,
And Caiaphas was in his own mind
A benefactor to mankind.
Both read the Bible day and night,
But thou read'st black where I read white.

β

Was Jesus gentle, or did He
Give any marks of gentility?
When twelve years old He ran away,
And left His parents in dismay.

ROSSETTI MS.

When after three days' sorrow found,
Loud as Sinai's trumpet-sound:
'No earthly parents I confess:
My Heavenly Father's business.
Ye understand not what I say,
And, angry, force Me to obey.
Obedience is a duty then,
And favour gains with God and men.'
John from the wilderness loud cried;
Satan gloried in his pride.
'Come,' said Satan, 'come away,
I'll soon see if you'll obey!
John for disobedience bled,
But you can turn the stones to bread.
God's high king and God's high priest
Shall plant their glories in your breast,
If Caiaphas you will obey,
If Herod you with bloody prey
Feed with the sacrifice and be
Obedient; fall down, worship me.'
Thunders and lightnings broke around,
And Jesus' voice in thunders' sound:
'Thus I seize the spiritual prey.
Ye smiters with disease, make way.
I come your King and God to seize,
Is God a smiter with disease?'
The god of this world raged in vain;
He bound old Satan in His chain,
And, bursting forth, his furious ire
Became a chariot of fire.
Throughout the land He took His course,
And trac'd diseases to their source.
He curs'd the Scribe and Pharisee,

ROSSETTI MS.

Trampling down hypocrisy.
Where'er His chariot took its way,
There Gates of Death let in the Day,
Broke down from every chain and bar;
And Satan in His spiritual war
Dragg'd at His chariot-wheels: loud bowl'd
The god of this world: louder roll'd
The chariot-wheels, and louder still
His voice was heard from Zion's Hill,
And in His hand the scourge shone bright;
He scourg'd the merchant Canaanite
From out the Temple of His Mind,
And in his body tight does bind
Satan and all his hellish crew;
And thus with wrath He did subdue
The serpent bulk of Nature's dross,
Till He had nail'd it to the Cross.
He took on sin in the Virgin's womb
And put it off on the Cross and tomb
To be worshipp'd by the Church of Rome.

γ

Was Jesus humble? or did He
Give any proofs of humility?
Boast of high things with humble tone,
And give with charity a stone?
When but a child He ran away,
And left His parents in dismay.
When they had wander'd three days long
These were the words upon His tongue:

ROSSETTI MS.

'No earthly parents I confess:
 I am doing My Father's business.'
 When the rich learnèd Pharisee
 Came to consult Him secretly,
 Upon his heart with iron pen
 He wrote 'Ye must be born again.'
 He was too proud to take a bribe;
 He spoke with authority, not like a Scribe.
 He says with most consummate art
 'Follow Me, I am meek and lowly of heart,
 As that is the only way to escape
 The miser's net and the glutton's trap.'
 What can be done with such desperate fools
 Who follow after the heathen schools?
 I was standing by when Jesus died;
 What I call'd humility, they call'd pride.
 He who loves his enemies betrays his friends.
 This surely is not what Jesus intends;
 But the sneaking pride of heroic schools,
 And the Scribes' and Pharisees' virtuous rules;
 For He acts with honest, triumphant pride,
 And this is the cause that Jesus died.
 He did not die with Christian ease,
 Asking pardon of His enemies:
 If He had, Caiaphas would forgive;
 Sneaking submission can always live.
 He had only to say that God was the Devil,
 And the Devil was God, like a Christian civil;
 Mild Christian regrets to the Devil confess
 For affronting him thrice in the wilderness;—
 He had soon been bloody Caesar's elf,
 And at last he would have been Caesar himself.
 Like Dr. Priestly and Bacon and Newton

ROSSETTI MS.

(Poor spiritual knowledge is not worth a button!)
For thus the Gospel St. Isaac confutes :
'God can only be known by His attributes ;
And as for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost,
Or of Christ and His Father, it's all a boast
And pride, and vanity of the imagination,
That disdains to follow this world's fashion.'
To teach doubt and experiment
Certainly was not what Christ meant.
What was He doing all that time,
From twelve years old to manly prime ?
Was He then idle, or the less
About His Father's business ?
Or was His wisdom held in scorn
Before His wrath began to burn
In miracles throughout the land,
That quite unnerved the seraph band ?
If He had been Antichrist, creeping Jesus,
He'd have done anything to please us ;
Gone sneaking into synagogues,
And not us'd the elders and priests like dogs ;
But humble as a lamb or ass
Obey'd Himself to Caiaphas.
God wants not man to humble himself :
That is the trick of the ancient elf.
This is the race that Jesus ran :
Humble to God, haughty to man,
Cursing the rulers before the people
Even to the Temple's highest steeple,
And when He humbled Himself to God
Then descended the cruel rod.
'If Thou humblest Thyself, Thou humblest Me.
Thou also dwell'st in eternity.

ROSSETTI MS.

Thou art a Man: God is no more;
 Thy own humanity learn to adore,
 For that is My spirit of life.
 Awake, arise to spiritual strife,
 And Thy revenge abroad display
 In terrors at the last judgement day.
 God's mercy and long suffering
 Is but the sinner to judgement to bring.
 Thou on the Cross for them shalt pray—
 And take revenge at the last day.'
 Jesus replied, and thunders hurl'd:
 'I never will pray for the world.
 Once I did so when I pray'd in the Garden;
 I wish'd to take with Me a bodily pardon.'
 Can that which was of woman born,
 In the absence of the morn,
 When the soul fell into sleep,
 And archangels round it weep,
 Shooting out against the light
 Fibres of a deadly night,
 Reasoning upon its own dark fiction,
 In doubt which is self-contradiction?
 Humility is only doubt,
 And does the sun and moon blot out,
 Rooting over with thorns and stems
 The buried soul and all its gems.
 This life's five windows of the soul
 Distorts the Heavens from pole to pole,
 And leads you to believe a lie
 When you see with, not thro', the eye
 That was born in a night, to perish in a night,
 When the soul slept in the beams of light.

ROSSETTI MS.

δ

This was spoken by my spectre to Voltaire, Bacon, &c.

Did Jesus teach doubt? or did He
Give any lessons of philosophy,
Charge visionaries with deceiving,
Or call men wise for not believing?

ε

Was Jesus born of a Virgin pure
With narrow soul and looks demure?
If He intended to take on sin
The mother should an harlot been;
Just such a one as Magdalen,
With seven devils in her pen.
Or were Jew virgins still more curs'd,
And more sucking devils nurs'd?
Or what was it which He took on
That He might bring salvation?
A body subject to be tempted,
From neither pain nor grief exempted;
Or such a body as might not feel
The passions that with sinners deal?
Yes, but they say He never fell.
Ask Caiaphas; for he can tell.—
'He mock'd the Sabbath, and He mock'd
The Sabbath's God, and He unlock'd
The evil spirits from their shrines,
And turn'd fishermen to divines;
O'erturn'd the tent of secret sins,
And its golden cords and pins,

ROSSETTI MS.

In the bloody shrine of war
 Pour'd around from star to star,—
 Halls of justice, hating vice,
 Where the devil combs his lice.
 He turn'd the devils into swine
 That He might tempt the Jews to dine;
 Since which, a pig has got a look
 That for a Jew may be mistook.
 "Obey your parents." What says He?
 "Woman, what have I to do with thee?
 No earthly parents I confess:
 I am doing My Father's business."
 He scorn'd earth's parents, scorn'd earth's God,
 And mock'd the one and the other's rod;
 His seventy disciples sent
 Against religion and government—
 They by the sword of justice fell,
 And Him their cruel murderer tell.
 He left His father's trade to roam,
 A wand'ring vagrant without home;
 And thus He others' labour stole,
 That He might live above control.
 The publicans and harlots He
 Selected for His company,
 And from the adulteress turn'd away
 God's righteous law, that lost its prey.'



Was Jesus chaste? or did He
 Give any lessons of chastity?

ROSSETTI MS.

The Morning blushèd fiery red :
Mary was found in adulterous bed ;
Earth groan'd beneath, and Heaven above
Trembled at discovery of Love.
Jesus was sitting in Moses' chair.
They brought the trembling woman there.
Moses commands she be ston'd to death.
What was the sound of Jesus' breath?
He laid His hand on Moses' law ;
The ancient Heavens, in silent awe,
Writ with curses from pole to pole,
All away began to roll.
The Earth trembling and naked lay
In secret bed of mortal clay ;
On Sinai felt the Hand Divine
Pulling back the bloody shrine ;
And she heard the breath of God,
As she heard by Eden's flood :
'Good and Evil are no more !
Sinai's trumpets cease to roar !
Cease, finger of God, to write !
The Heavens are not clean in Thy sight.
Thou art good, and Thou alone ;
Nor may the sinner cast one stone.
To be good only, is to be
A God or else a Pharisee.
Thou Angel of the Presence Divine,
That didst create this Body of Mine,
Wherefore hast thou writ these laws
And created Hell's dark jaws ?
My Presence I will take from thee :
A cold leper thou shalt be.
Tho' thou wast so pure and bright

ROSSETTI MS.

That Heaven was impure in thy sight,
Tho' thy oath turn'd Heaven pale, .
Tho' thy covenant built Hell's jail,
Tho' thou didst all to chaos roll
With the serpent for its soul,
Still the breath Divine does move,
And the breath Divine is Love.
Mary, fear not. Let me see
The seven devils that torment thee.
Hide not from My sight thy sin,
That forgiveness thou may'st win.
Has no man condemn'd thee?'
'No man, Lord.' 'Then what is he
Who shall accuse thee? Come ye forth,
Fallen fiends of heavenly birth,
That have forgot your ancient love,
And driven away my trembling dove.
You shall bow before her feet;
You shall lick the dust for meat;
And tho' you cannot love, but hate,
Shall be beggars at Love's gate.
What was thy love? Let Me see it;
Was it love or dark deceit?'
'Love too long from me has fled;
'Twas dark deceit, to earn my bread;
'Twas covet, or 'twas custom, or
Some trifle not worth caring for;
That they may call a shame and sin
Love's temple that God dwelleth in,
And hide in secret hidden shrine
The naked human form divine,
And render that a lawless thing
On which the soul expands its wing.

ROSSETTI MS.

But this, O Lord, this was my sin,
When first I let these devils in,
In dark pretence to chastity
Blaspheming Love, blaspheming Thee,
Thence rose secret adulteries,
And thence did covet also rise.
My sin Thou hast forgiven me;
Canst Thou forgive my blasphemy?
Canst Thou return to this dark hell,
And in my burning bosom dwell?
And canst Thou die that I may live?
And canst Thou pity and forgive?'
Then roll'd the shadowy Man away
From the limbs of Jesus, to make them his prey,
An ever devouring appetite,
Glittering with festering venoms bright;
Crying 'Crucify this cause of distress,
Who don't keep the secrets of holiness!
The mental powers by diseases we bind;
But He heals the deaf, the dumb, and the blind
Whom God has afflicted for secret ends,
He comforts and heals and calls them friends.'
But, when Jesus was crucified,
Then was perfected his galling pride.
In three nights he devour'd his prey,
And still he devours the body of clay;
For dust and clay is the serpent's meat,
Which never was made for man to eat.

η

Seeing this False Christ, in fury and passion
I made my voice heard all over the nation.
What are those, &c.

θ

[*Epilogue*]

I am sure this Jesus will not do,
Either for Englishman or Jew.

POEMS FROM THE
PICKERING MS.

(CIRCA 1801-1803)

'THE SMALLER AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION'

POEMS FROM THE
PICKERING MS.

The Smile

THERE is a smile of love,
And there is a smile of deceit,
And there is a smile of smiles
In which these two smiles meet.

And there is a frown of hate,
And there is a frown of disdain,
And there is a frown of frowns
Which you strive to forget in vain,

For it sticks in the heart's deep core
And it sticks in the deep backbone—
And no smile that ever was smil'd,
But only one smile alone,

That betwixt the cradle and grave
It only once smil'd can be ;
And, when it once is smil'd,
There's an end to all misery.

The Golden Net

THREE Virgins at the break of day,
 'Whither, young man, whither away?
 Alas for woe! alas for woe!'
 They cry, and tears for ever flow.
 The one was cloth'd in flames of fire,
 The other cloth'd in iron wire,
 The other cloth'd in tears and sighs,
 Dazzling bright before my eyes.
 They bore a net of golden twine
 To hang upon the branches fine.
 Pitying I wept to see the woe
 That Love and Beauty undergo,
 To be consum'd in burning fires
 And in ungratified desires,
 And in tears cloth'd night and day
 Melted all my soul away.
 When they saw my tears, a smile
 That did Heaven itself beguile,
 Bore the golden net aloft,
 As on downy pinions soft,
 Over the morning of my day.
 Underneath the net I stray,
 Now entreating Burning Fire,
 Now entreating Iron Wire,
 Now entreating Tears and Sighs.
 O, when will the morning rise?

The Mental Traveller

I TRAVELL'D thro' a land of men,
A land of men and women too;
And heard and saw such dreadful things
As cold earth-wanderers never knew.

For there the babe is born in joy
That was begotten in dire woe;
Just as we reap in joy the fruit
Which we in bitter tears did sow.

And if the babe is born a boy
He's given to a woman old,
Who nails him down upon a rock,
Catches his shrieks in cups of gold.

She binds iron thorns around his head,
She pierces both his hands and feet,
She cuts his heart out at his side,
To make it feel both cold and heat.

Her fingers number every nerve,
Just as a miser counts his gold;
She lives upon his shrieks and cries,
And she grows young as he grows old.

Till he becomes a bleeding youth,
And she becomes a virgin bright;
Then he rends up his manacles,
And binds her down for his delight.

PICKERING MS.

He plants himself in all her nerves,
Just as a husbandman his mould;
And she becomes his dwelling-place
And garden fruitful seventyfold.

An aged shadow, soon he fades,
Wand'ring round an earthly cot,
Full-fillèd all with gems and gold
Which he by industry had got.

And these are the gems of the human soul,
The rubies and pearls of a love-sick eye,
The countless gold of the aching heart,
The martyr's groan and the lover's sigh.

They are his meat, they are his drink;
He feeds the beggar and the poor
And the wayfaring traveller:
For ever open is his door.

His grief is their eternal joy;
They make the roofs and walls to ring.
Till from the fire on the hearth
A little female babe does spring;

And she is all of solid fire
And gems and gold, that none his hand
Dares stretch to touch her baby form,
Or wrap her in his swaddling-band.

But she comes to the man she loves,
If young or old, or rich or poor;
They soon drive out the agèd host,
A beggar at another's door.

PICKERING MS.

He wanders weeping far away,
Until some other take him in;
Oft blind and age-bent, sore distress,
Until he can a maiden win.

And to allay his freezing age,
The poor man takes her in his arms;
The cottage fades before his sight,
The garden and its lovely charms.

The guests are scatter'd thro' the land,
For the eye altering alters all;
The senses roll themselves in fear,
And the flat earth becomes a ball;

The stars, sun, moon, all shrink away,
A desert vast without a bound,
And nothing left to eat or drink,
And a dark desert all around.

The honey of her infant lips,
The bread and wine of her sweet smile,
The wild game of her roving eye,
Does him to infancy beguile;

For as he eats and drinks he grows
Younger and younger every day;
And on the desert wild they both
Wander in terror and dismay.

Like the wild stag she flees away,
Her fear plants many a thicket wild;
While he pursues her night and day,
By various arts of love beguil'd;

PICKERING MS.

By various arts of love and hate,
Till the wide desert planted o'er
With labyrinths of wayward love,
Where roam the lion, wolf, and boar.

Till he becomes a wayward babe,
And she a weeping woman old.
Then many a lover wanders here;
The sun and stars are nearer roll'd;

The trees bring forth sweet ecstasy
To all who in the desert roam;
Till many a city there is built,
And many a pleasant shepherd's home.

But when they find the frowning babe,
Terror strikes through the region wide:
They cry 'The babe! the babe is born!'
And flee away on every side.

For who dare touch the frowning form,
His arm is wither'd to its root;
Lions, boars, wolves, all howling flee,
And every tree does shed its fruit.

And none can touch that frowning form,
Except it be a woman old;
She nails him down upon the rock,
And all is done as I have told.

✓ *The Land of Dreams*

*Reality is never
ideal.*

AWAKE, awake, my little boy!
Thou wast thy mother's only joy;
Why dost thou weep in thy gentle sleep?
Awake! thy father does thee keep.

'O, what land is the Land of Dreams?
What are its mountains, and what are its streams?
O father! I saw my mother there,
Among the lilies by waters fair.

'Among the lambs, clothèd in white,
She walk'd with her Thomas in sweet delight.
I wept for joy, like a dove I mourn,
O! when shall I again return?'

Dear child, I also by pleasant streams
Have wander'd all night in the Land of Dreams.
But tho' calm and warm the waters wide,
I could not get to the other side.

'Father, O father! what do we here
In this land of unbelief and fear?
The Land of Dreams is better far,
Above the light of the morning star.'

*future life is to be
desired than present
life*

Mary

SWEET Mary, the first time she ever was there,
Came into the ball-room among the fair;
The young men and maidens around her throng,
And these are the words upon every tongue:

‘An angel is here from the heavenly climes,
Or again does return the golden times;
Her eyes outshine every brilliant ray,
She opens her lips—’tis the Month of May.’

Mary moves in soft beauty and conscious delight,
To augment with sweet smiles all the joys of the night,
Nor once blushes to own to the rest of the fair
That sweet Love and Beauty are worthy our care.

In the morning the villagers rose with delight,
And repeated with pleasure the joys of the night,
And Mary arose among friends to be free,
But no friend from henceforward thou, Mary, shalt see.

Some said she was proud, some call’d her a whore,
And some, when she passèd by, shut-to the door;
A damp cold came o’er her, her blushes all fled,
Her lilies and roses are blighted and shed.

‘O, why was I born with a different face?
Why was I not born like this envious race?
Why did Heaven adorn me with bountiful hand,
And then set me down in an envious land?’

PICKERING MS.

'To be weak as a lamb and smooth as a dove,
And not to raise envy, is call'd Christian love;
But if you raise envy your merit's to blame
For planting such spite in the weak and the tame.

'I will humble my beauty, I will not dress fine,
I will keep from the ball, and my eyes shall not shine;
And if any girl's lover forsakes her for me
I'll refuse him my hand, and from envy be free.'

She went out in morning attir'd plain and neat;
'Proud Mary's gone mad,' said the child in the street;
She went out in morning in plain neat attire,
And came home in evening bespatter'd with mire.

She trembled and wept, sitting on the bedside,
She forgot it was night, and she trembled and cried;
She forgot it was night, she forgot it was morn,
Her soft memory imprinted with faces of scorn;

With faces of scorn and with eyes of disdain,
Like foul fiends inhabiting Mary's mild brain;
She remembers no face like the Human Divine;
All faces have envy, sweet Mary, but thine;

And thine is a face of sweet love in despair,
And thine is a face of mild sorrow and care,
And thine is a face of wild terror and fear
That shall never be quiet till laid on its bier.

The Crystal Cabinet

THE maiden caught me in the wild,
Where I was dancing merrily ;
She put me into her cabinet,
And lock'd me up with a golden key.

This cabinet is form'd of gold
And pearl and crystal shining bright,
And within it opens into a world
And a little lovely moony night.

Another England there I saw,
Another London with its Tower,
Another Thames and other hills,
And another pleasant Surrey bower,

Another maiden like herself,
Translucent, lovely, shining clear,
Threefold each in the other clos'd,—
O, what a pleasant trembling fear !

O, what a smile ! a threefold smile
Fill'd me that like a flame I burn'd ;
I bent to kiss the lovely maid,
And found a threefold kiss return'd.

PICKERING MS.

I strove to seize the inmost form
 With ardour fierce and hands of flame,
But burst the crystal cabinet,
 And like a weeping babe became—

A weeping babe upon the wild,
 And weeping woman pale reclin'd,
And in the outward air again
 I fill'd with woes the passing wind.

The Grey Monk

‘**I** DIE, I die!’ the mother said,
‘My children die for lack of bread.
What more has the merciless tyrant said?’
The monk sat down on the stony bed.

The blood red ran from the grey monk’s side,
His hands and feet were wounded wide,
His body bent, his arms and knees
Like to the roots of ancient trees.

His eye was dry; no tear could flow :
A hollow groan first spoke his woe.
He trembled and shudder’d upon the bed ;
At length with a feeble cry he said :

‘When God commanded this hand to write
In the studious hours of deep midnight,
He told me the writing I wrote should prove
The bane of all that on earth I love.

‘My brother starv’d between two walls,
His children’s cry my soul appalls ;
I mock’d at the wrack and griding chain,
My bent body mocks their torturing pain.

‘Thy father drew his sword in the north,
With his thousands strong he marchèd forth ;
Thy brother has arm’d himself in steel,
To avenge the wrongs thy children feel.

PICKERING MS.

lay in
high
all
on he
ained

{ 'But vain the sword and vain the bow,
They never can work War's overthrow.
The hermit's prayer and the widow's tear
Alone can free the world from fear.

{ 'For a tear is an intellectual thing,
And a sigh is the sword of an angel king,
And the bitter groan of the martyr's woe
Is an arrow from the Almighty's bow.

{ 'The hand of Vengeance found the bed
To which the purple tyrant fled;
The iron hand crush'd the tyrant's head,
And became a tyrant in his stead.'

PICKERING MS.

Renaissance of Thunder. Romanticism
Sympathy for animals

Auguries of Innocence
Innocent state of mind

TO see a world in a grain of sand, *symbol of the world*
And a heaven in a wild flower, *beauty in simplicity*
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour. — *part of eternity*

A robin redbreast in a cage !

Puts all Heaven in a rage.

A dove-house fill'd with doves and pigeons 2 *any disturbance*
Shudders Hell thro' all its regions. *nature has a disturbance*

A dog starv'd at his master's gate
Predicts the ruin of the state. *in road to destruction*

A horse misused upon the road 4
Calls to Heaven for human blood.

Each outcry of the hunted hare 5

A fibre from the brain does tear.

A skylark wounded in the wing, 6

A cherubim does cease to sing.

The game-cock clipped and arm'd for fight 7

Does the rising sun affright.

Every wolf's and lion's howl 8

Raises from Hell a human soul.

The wild deer, wand'ring here and there, 9 *friendliness*
Keeps the human soul from care.

The lamb misus'd breeds public strife, *10 oppression, cruelty*
And yet forgives the butcher's knife.

He who shall hurt the little wren
Shall never be belov'd by men. *made for food*

hearted

PICKERING MS.

animals

He who the ox to wrath has mov'd 12
Shall never be by woman lov'd.

The wanton boy that kills the fly
Shall feel the spider's enmity. 13

He who torments the chafer's sprite 14
Weaves a bower in endless night.

The caterpillar on the leaf 15
Repeats to thee thy mother's grief.

Kill not the moth nor butterfly, 16
For the last judgement draweth nigh.

He who shall train the horse to war 17
Shall never pass the polar bar.

The beggar's dog and widow's cat 18
Feed them and thou wilt grow fat.

The bat that flits at close of eve 1
Has left the brain that won't believe.

The owl that calls upon the night 2
Speaks the unbeliever's fright.

The gnat that sings his summer's song
Poison gets from Slander's tongue.

The poison of the snake and newt
Is the sweat of Envy's foot.

The poison of the honey-bee
Is the artist's jealousy.

A truth that's told with bad intent }
Beats all the lies you can invent. }

Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine;
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.

Life itself
Joy and sorrow
mixed

PICKERING MS.

It is right it should be so ;
 Man was made for joy and woe ;
 And, when this we rightly know,
 Thro' the world we safely go.
 The babe is more than swaddling-bands ;
 Throughout all these human lands
 Tools were made, and born were hands,
 Every farmer understands. *known to value humans*
 Every tear from every eye
 Becomes a babe in eternity ;
 This is caught by females bright,
 And return'd to its own delight.
 The bleat, the bark, bellow, and roar,
 Are waves that beat on Heaven's shore.
 The babe that weeps the rod beneath
 Writes revenge in realms of death.
 He who mocks the infant's faith
 Shall be mock'd in age and death.
 He who shall teach the child to doubt
 The rotting grave shall ne'er get out.
 He who respects the infant's faith
 Triumphs over Hell and Death.
 The child's toys and the old man's reasons *condemning*
 Are the fruits of the two seasons. *answer comes by faith*
 The questioner, who sits so sly,
 Shall never know how to reply.
 He who replies to words of doubt
 Doth put the light of knowledge out.
 A riddle, or the cricket's cry,
 Is to doubt a fit reply.
 The emmet's inch and eagle's mile
 Make lame Philosophy to smile. *have to take for granted*

PICKERING MS.

He who doubts from what he sees
Will ne'er believe, do what you please.
If the sun and moon should doubt,
They'd immediately go out.

*cial
questions
day*
The prince's robes and beggar's rags
Are toadstools on the miser's bags.
The beggar's rags, fluttering in air,
Does to rags the heavens tear.

The poor man's farthing is worth more
Than all the gold on Afric's shore.

One mite wrung from the lab'rer's hands *injustice*
Shall buy and sell the miser's lands;

Or, if protected from on high,

Does that whole nation sell and buy.

The soldier, arm'd with sword and gun,

Palsied strikes the summer's sun. *all nature horrified*

The strongest poison ever known *ambition*

Came from Caesar's laurel crown.

Nought can deform the human race

Like to the armour's iron brace.

When gold and gems adorn the plow

To peaceful arts shall Envy bow.

To be in a passion you good may do,

But no good if a passion is in you.

The whore and gambler, by the state

Licensed, build that nation's fate.

The harlot's cry from street to street

Shall weave Old England's winding-sheet. *social evils*

The winner's shout, the loser's curse,

Dance before dead England's hearse.

*if protected by
the state,
we are distracted*

PICKERING MS.

Every night and every morn
 Some to misery are born.
 Every morn and every night
 Some are born to sweet delight.
 Some are born to sweet delight,
 Some are born to endless night.
 We are led to believe a lie
 When we see not thro' the eye,
 Which was born in a night to perish in a night,
 When the soul slept in beams of light.
 God appears, and God is light,
 To those poor souls who dwell in Night;
 But does a human form display
 To those who dwell in realms of Day.

*born to see
 destiny
 if we see through the
 spiritual eye, we see God in
 form of a man
 he sits in
 nobility*

William Bond

I WONDER whether the girls are mad,
And I wonder whether they mean to kill,
And I wonder if William Bond will die,
For assuredly he is very ill.

He went to church in a May morning,
Attended by fairies, one, two, and three;
But the angels of Providence drove them away,
And he return'd home in misery.

He went not out to the field nor fold,
He went not out to the village nor town,
But he came home in a black black cloud,
And took to his bed, and there lay down.

And an angel of Providence at his feet,
And an angel of Providence at his head,
And in the midst a black black cloud,
And in the midst the sick man on his bed.

And on his right hand was Mary Green,
And on his left hand was his sister Jane,
And their tears fell thro' the black black cloud
To drive away the sick man's pain.

'O William, if thou dost another love,
Dost another love better than poor Mary,
Go and take that other to be thy wife,
And Mary Green shall her servant be.'

PICKERING MS.

'Yes, Mary, I do another love,
Another I love far better than thee,
And another I will have for my wife;
Then what have I to do with thee?

'For thou art melancholy pale,
And on thy head is the cold moon's shine,
But she is ruddy and bright as day,
And the sunbeams dazzle from her eyne.'

Mary trembled and Mary chill'd,
And Mary fell down on the right-hand floor,
That William Bond and his sister Jane
Scarce could recover Mary more.

When Mary woke and found her laid
On the right hand of her William dear,
On the right hand of his lovèd bed,
And saw her William Bond so near,

The fairies that fled from William Bond
Dancèd around her shining head,
They dancèd over the pillow white,
And the angels of Providence left the bed.

I thought Love lived in the hot sunshine,
But oh, he lives in the moony light!
I thought to find Love in the heat of day,
But sweet Love is the comforter of night.

Seek Love in the pity of others' woe,
In the gentle relief of another's care,
In the darkness of night and the winter's snow,
In the naked and outcast, seek Love there!

*other men
Love*

POEMS FROM LETTERS

(1800-1803)

POEMS FROM LETTERS

*To my dear Friend, Mrs. Anna
Flaxman*

THIS song to the flower of Flaxman's joy,
To the blossom of hope for a sweet decoy;
Do all that you can, or all that you may,
'To entice him to Felpham and far away.

Away to sweet Felpham, for Heaven is there;
The Ladder of Angels descends thro' the air;
On the turret its spiral does softly descend,
Thro' the village then winds, at my cot it does end.

You stand in the village and look up to Heaven;
The precious stones glitter on flights seventy-seven;
And my brother is there, and my friend and thine
Descend and ascend with the bread and the wine.

The bread of sweet thought and the wine of delight
Feed the village of Felpham by day and by night,
And at his own door the bless'd hermit does stand,
Dispensing unceasing to all the wide land.

POEMS FROM LETTERS

To Mr. Butts

TO my friend Butts I write
My first vision of light,
On the yellow sands sitting.
The sun was emitting
His glorious beams
From Heaven's high streams.
Over sea, over land,
My eyes did expand
Into regions of air,
Away from all care ;
Into regions of fire,
Remote from desire ;
The light of the morning
Heaven's mountains adorning :
In particles bright,
The jewels of light
Distinct shone and clear.
Amaz'd and in fear
I each particle gazèd,
Astonish'd, amazèd ;
For each was a Man
Human-form'd. Swift I ran,
For they beckon'd to me,
Remote by the sea,
Saying: ' Each grain of sand,
Every stone on the land,
Each rock and each hill,
Each fountain and rill,

POEMS FROM LETTERS

Each herb and each tree,
Mountain, hill, earth, and sea,
Cloud, meteor, and star,
Are men seen afar.'

I stood in the streams
Of Heaven's bright beams,
And saw Felpham sweet
Beneath my bright feet,
In soft female charms ;
And in her fair arms
My shadow I knew,
And my wife's shadow too,
And my sister, and friend.
We like infants descend
In our shadows on earth,
Like a weak mortal birth.
My eyes, more and more,
Like a sea without shore,
Continue expanding,
The Heavens commanding ;
Till the jewels of light,
Heavenly men beaming bright,
Appear'd as One Man, .
Who complacent began
My limbs to enfold
In His beams of bright gold ;
Like dross purg'd away
All my mire and my clay.
Soft consum'd in delight,
In His bosom sun-bright
I remain'd. Soft He smil'd,
And I heard His voice mild,

POEMS FROM LETTERS

Saying : 'This is My fold,
O thou ram horn'd with gold,
Who awakest from sleep
On the sides of the deep.
On the mountains around
The roarings resound
Of the lion and wolf,
The loud sea, and deep gulf.
These are guards of My fold,
O thou ram horn'd with gold !'
And the voice faded mild :
I remain'd as a child ;
All I ever had known
Before me bright shone :
I saw you and your wife
By the fountains of life.
Such the vision to me
Appear'd on the sea.

POEMS FROM LETTERS

To Mrs. Butts

WIFE of the friend of those I most revere,
Receive this tribute from a harp sincere ;
Go on in virtuous seed sowing on mould
Of human vegetation, and behold
Your harvest springing to eternal life,
Parent of youthful minds, and happy wife !

POEMS FROM LETTERS

Composed while walking from Felpham to Lavant

WITH happiness stretch'd across the hills
In a cloud that dewy sweetness distills;
With a blue sky spread over with wings,
And a mild sun that mounts and sings;
With trees and fields full of fairy elves,
And little devils who fight for themselves—
Rememb'ring the verses that Hayley sung
When my heart knock'd against the root of my tongue—
With angels planted in hawthorn bowers,
And God Himself in the passing hours;
With silver angels across my way,
And golden demons that none can stay;
With my father hovering upon the wind,
And my brother Robert just behind,
And my brother John, the evil one,
In a black cloud making his moan,—
Though dead, they appear upon my path,
Notwithstanding my terrible wrath;
They beg, they intreat, they drop their tears,
Fill'd full of hopes, fill'd full of fears—
With a thousand angels upon the wind,
Pouring disconsolate from behind
To drive them off, and before my way
A frowning thistle implores my stay.
What to others a trifle appears
Fills me full of smiles or tears;



Robert Blake, from an illustration in Blake's Milton

POEMS FROM LETTERS

For double the vision my eyes do see,
And a double vision is always with me.
With my inward eye, 'tis an old man grey,
With my outward, a thistle across my way.
'If thou goest back,' the thistle said,
'Thou art to endless woe betray'd;
For here does Theotormon lower,
And here is Enitharmon's bower;
And Los the terrible thus hath sworn,
Because thou backward dost return,
Poverty, envy, old age, and fear,
Shall bring thy wife upon a bier;
And Butts shall give what Fuseli gave,
A dark black rock and a gloomy cave.'

I struck the thistle with my foot,
And broke him up from his delving root.
'Must the duties of life each other cross?
Must every joy be dung and dross?
Must my dear Butts feel cold neglect
Because I give Hayley his due respect?
Must Flaxman look upon me as wild,
And all my friends be with doubts beguil'd?
Must my wife live in my sister's bane,
Or my sister survive on my love's pain?
The curses of Los, the terrible shade,
And his dismal terrors make me afraid.'

So I spoke, and struck in my wrath
The old man weltering upon my path.
Then Los appear'd in all his power:
In the sun he appear'd, descending before
My face in fierce flames; in my double sight

POEMS FROM LETTERS

'Twas outward a sun, inward Los in his might.
'My hands are labour'd day and night,
And ease comes never in my sight.
My wife has no indulgence given
Except what comes to her from Heaven.
We eat little, we drink less,
This earth breeds not our happiness.
Another sun feeds our life's streams,
We are not warmèd with thy beams;
Thou measurest not the time to me,
Nor yet the space that I do see;
My mind is not with thy light array'd,
Thy terrors shall not make me afraid.'

When I had my defiance given,
The sun stood trembling in heaven;
The moon, that glow'd remote below,
Became leprous and white as snow;
And every soul of men on the earth
Felt affliction, and sorrow, and sickness, and dearth.
Los flam'd in my path, and the sun was hot
With the bows of my mind and the arrows of thought.
My bowstring fierce with ardour breathes;
My arrows glow in their golden sheaves;
My brothers and father march before;
The heavens drop with human gore.

Now I a fourfold vision see,
And a fourfold vision is given to me;
'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight,
And threefold in soft Beulah's night,
And twofold always. May God us keep
From single vision, and Newton's sleep!

EPIGRAMS, QUATRAINS
AND COUPLETS

(CIRCA 1789-1810)

EPIGRAMS AND SHORT SATIRICAL PIECES

I

[On Sir Joshua Reynolds' disappointment at his first impressions of Raphael]

Some look to see the sweet outlines,
And beauteous forms that Love does wear;
Some look to find out patches, paint,
Bracelets and stays and powder'd hair¹.

2

When Sir Joshua Reynolds died
All Nature was degraded;
The King dropp'd a tear into the Queen's ear,
And all his pictures faded.

3

On the Venetian Painter

He makes the lame to walk we all agree,
But then he strives to blind all who can see.

¹ This and the four following epigrams are taken from Blake's marginalia in his annotated copy of Reynolds' *Discourses*. The remainder of the epigrams (6-51) are from the MS. Book.

EPIGRAMS

4

A pair of stays to mend the shape
Of crooked humpy woman,
Put on, O Venus; now thou art
Quite a Venetian Roman.

5

[On Sir Joshua Reynolds]

O Reader, behold the Philosopher's grave!
He was born quite a Fool, but he died quite a Knave.

6

Lacedaemonian Instruction

Come hither, my boy, tell me what thou seest there.
A fool tangled in a religious snare.

7

An Answer to the Parson

Why of the sheep do you not learn peace?
Because I don't want you to shear my fleece.

8

Her whole life is an epigram smart, smooth and neatly
penn'd,
Platted quite neat to catch applause, with a hang-noose
at the end.

EPIGRAMS

9

No real style of colouring ever appears,
But advertising in the newspapers.
Look there—you'll see Sir Joshua's colouring:
Look at his pictures—all has taken wing!

10

[On William Haines]

The Sussex men are noted fools,
And weak is their brain pan—
I wonder if H—— the painter
Is not a Sussex man.

11

[On Flaxman]

'Madman,' I have been call'd: 'Fool,' they call thee.
I wonder which they envy—thee or me?

12

To H[unt]

You think Fuseli is not a great painter. I'm glad.
This is one of the best compliments he ever had.

13

Can there be anything more mean,
More malice in disguise,
Than praise a man for doing what
That man does most despise?
Reynolds lectures exactly so
When he praises Michael Angelo.

EPIGRAMS

14

[*On Hayley*]

Of H——'s birth this was the happy lot:
His mother on his father him begot.

15

He's a blockhead who wants a proof of what he can't
perceive;
And he's a fool who tries to make such a blockhead
believe.

16

[*On Cromek*]

Cr—— loves artists as he loves his meat:
He loves the Art; but 'tis the art to cheat.

17

Mr. Cromek to Mr. Stothard

Fortune favours the brave, old proverbs say;
But not with money; that is not the way.
Turn back, turn back; you travel all in vain;
Turn through the iron gate down Sneaking Lane.

Florentine Ingratitude

Sir Joshua sent his own portrait to
 The birthplace of Michael Angelo,
 And in the hand of the simpering fool
 He put a dirty paper scroll,
 And on the paper, to be polite,
 Did 'Sketches by Michael Angelo' write.
 The Florentines said "'Tis a Dutch-English bore,
 Michael Angelo's name writ on Rembrandt's door.'
 The Florentines call it an English fetch,
 For Michael Angelo never did sketch—
 Every line of his has meaning,
 And needs neither suckling nor weaning.
 'Tis the trading English-Venetian cant
 To speak Michael Angelo, and act Rembrandt,
 It will set his Dutch friends all in a roar
 To write 'Mich. Ang.' on Rembrandt's door;
 But you must not bring in your hand a lie
 If you mean that the Florentines should buy.
 Ghiotto's circle or Apelles' line
 Were not the work of sketchers drunk with wine;
 Nor of the city clock's running . . . fashion;
 Nor of Sir Isaac Newton's calculation.

EPIGRAMS

19

A Pitiful Case

The villain at the gallows tree,
When he is doom'd to die,
To assuage his misery
In virtue's praise does cry.

So Reynolds when he came to die,
To assuage his bitter woe,
Thus aloud did howl and cry:
'Michael Angelo! Michael Angelo!'

20

To the Royal Academy

A strange erratum in all the editions
Of Sir Joshua Reynolds' lectures
Should be corrected by the young gentlemen
And the Royal Academy's directors.

Instead of 'Michael Angelo,'
Read 'Rembrandt'; for it is fit
To make mere common honesty
In all that he has writ.

21

To F[laxman] and S[tothard]

I found them blind: I taught them how to see;
And now they know neither themselves nor me.
'Tis excellent to turn a thorn to a pin,
A fool to a bolt, a knave to a glass of gin.

EPIGRAMS

22

[*On Thomas Phillips*]

P—— lovèd me not as he lov'd his friends ;
For he lov'd them for gain, to serve his ends :
He lovèd me, and for no gain at all
But to rejoice and triumph in my fall.

23

[*On Hayley*]

To forgive enemies H—— does pretend,
Who never in his life forgave a friend,
And when he could not act upon my wife
Hired a villain to bereave my life.

24

On H[ayle]y's Friendship

When H——y finds out what you cannot do,
That is the very thing he'll set you to ;
If you break not your neck, 'tis not his fault ;
But pecks of poison are not pecks of salt.

25

Some men, created for destruction, come
Into the world, and make the world their home.
Be they as vile and base as e'er they can,
They'll still be callèd 'The World's Honest Man.'

EPIGRAMS

26

On S[tothard]

You say reserve and modesty he has,
Whose heart is iron, his head wood, and his face brass.
The fox, the owl, the beetle, and the bat
By sweet reserve and modesty get fat.

27

To H[ayley]

Thy friendship oft has made my heart to ache :
Do be my enemy—for friendship's sake.

28

Imitation of Pope: a compliment to the Ladies

Wondrous the gods, more wondrous are the men,
More wondrous, wondrous still, the cock and hen,
More wondrous still the table, stool and chair ;
But ah ! more wondrous still the charming fair.

29

An Epitaph

Come knock your heads against this stone,
For sorrow that poor John Thompson's gone.

EPIGRAMS

30

Another

I was buried near this dike,
That my friends may weep as much as they like.

31

Another

Here lies John Trot, the friend of all mankind:
He has not left one enemy behind.
Friends were quite hard to find, old authors say;
But now they stand in everybody's way.

32

My title as a genius thus is prov'd:
Not prais'd by Hayley, nor by Flaxman lov'd.

33

To English Connoisseurs

You must agree that Rubens was a fool,
And yet you make him master of your School,
And give more money for his slobberings
Than you will give for Rafael's finest things.
I understood Christ was a carpenter
And not a brewer's servant, my good Sir.

EPIGRAMS

34

*A Pretty Epigram for the encouragement
of those Who have paid great sums
in the Venetian and Flemish ooze*

Nature and Art in this together suit:
What is most grand is always most minute.
Rubens thinks tables, chairs and stools are grand,
But Rafael thinks a head, a foot, a hand.

35

These are the idiots' chiefest arts:
To blend and not define the parts.
The swallow sings, in courts of kings,
That fools have their high finishings.

And this the princes' golden rule,
The laborious stumble of a fool.
To make out the parts is the wise man's aim,
But to loose them the fool makes his foolish game.

36

Rafael, sublime, majestic, graceful, wise—
His executive power must I despise?
Rubens, low, vulgar, stupid, ignorant—
His power of execution I must grant?

EPIGRAMS

37

The cripple every step drudges and labours,
And says: 'Come, learn to walk of me, good neighbours.'
Sir Joshua in astonishment cries out:
'See, what great labour! pain in modest doubt!

He walks and stumbles as if he crep,
And how high labour'd is every step!'
Newton and Bacon cry 'Being badly nurst,
He is all experiments from last to first.'

38

Give pensions to the learned pig,
Or the hare playing on a tabor;
Anglus can never see perfection
But in the journeyman's labour.

39

All pictures that's painted with sense and with thought
Are painted by madmen, as sure as a groat;
For the greater the fool is the pencil more blest,
As when they are drunk they always paint best.
They never can Rafael it, Fuseli it, nor Blake it;
If they can't see an outline, pray how can they make it?
When men will draw outlines begin you to jaw them;
Madmen see outlines and therefore they draw them.

EPIGRAMS

40

On H[ayley] the Pickthank

I write the rascal thanks, till he and I
With thanks and compliments are quite drawn dry.

41

Cromek speaks

I always take my judgement from a fool
Because his judgement is so very cool;
Not prejudiced by feelings great or small,
Amiable state! he cannot feel at all.

42

When I see a Rubens, Rembrandt, Correggio,
I think of the crippled Harry and slobbering Joe;
And then I question thus: Are artists' rules
To be drawn from the works of two manifest fools?
Then God defend us from the Arts I say!
Send battle, murder, sudden death, O pray!
Rather than be such a blind human fool
I'd be an ass, a hog, a worm, a chair, a stool!

43

You say their pictures well painted be,
And yet they are blockheads you all agree:
Thank God! I never was sent to school
To be flogg'd into following the style of a fool.
The errors of a wise man make your rule,
Rather than the perfections of a fool.

EPIGRAMS

44

I asked my dear friend Orator Prig:
‘What’s the first part of oratory?’ He said: ‘A
great wig.’
‘And what is the second?’ Then, dancing a jig
And bowing profoundly, he said: ‘A great wig.’
‘And what is the third?’ Then he snored like a pig,
And, puffing his cheeks out, replied: ‘A great wig.’
So if a great painter with questions you push
‘What’s the first part of painting?’ he’ll say: ‘A
paint-brush.’
‘And what is the second?’ with most modest blush,
He’ll smile like a cherub, and say: ‘A paint-brush.’
‘And what is the third?’ he’ll bow like a rush,
With a leer in his eye, he’ll reply: ‘A paint-brush.’
Perhaps this is all a painter can want:
But, look yonder—that house is the house of Rem-
brandt! &c.

45

O dear Mother Outline! of wisdom most sage,
What’s the first part of painting; she said ‘Patronage.’
And what is the second, to please and engage,
She frowned like a fury, and said ‘Patronage.’
And what is the third: she put off old age
And smil’d like a siren and said ‘Patronage.’

EPIGRAMS

46

To Venetian Artists

That God is colouring Newton does show,
And the devil is a black outline, all of us know.
Perhaps this little fable may make us merry :
A dog went over the water without a wherry ;
A bone which he had stolen he had in his mouth ;
He cared not whether the wind was north or south.
As he swam he saw the reflection of the bone.
'This is quite perfection—one generalizing tone!
Outline! There's no outline, there's no such thing :
All is chiaroscuro, poco-pen—it's all colouring!'
Snap, snap! He has lost shadow and substance too.
He had them both before. 'Now how do ye do?'
'A great deal better than I was before :
Those who taste colouring love it more and more.'

47

Great men and fools do often me inspire ;
But the greater fool, the greater liar.

EPIGRAMS

48

Having given great offence by writing in prose,
 I'll write in verse as soft as Bartolloze.
 Some blush at what others can see no crime in;
 But nobody sees any harm in riming.
 Dryden, in rime, cries 'Milton only plann'd':
 Every fool shook his bells throughout the land.
 Tom Cooke cut Hogarth down with his clean gravings:
 Thousands of connoisseurs with joy ran raving.
 Thus, Hayley on his toilette seeing the soap,
 Cries, 'Homer is very much improv'd by Pope.'
 Some say I've given great provision to my foes,
 And that now I lead my false friends by the nose.
 Flaxman and Stothard, smelling a sweet savour,
 Cry 'Blakefied drawing spoils painter and engraver';
 While I, looking up to my umbrella,
 Resolv'd to be a very contrary fellow;
 Cry, looking quite from skumference to centre,
 'No one can finish so high as the original Inventor.'
 Thus poor Schiavonetti died of the Cromek—
 A thing that's tied around the examiner's neck!
 This is my sweet apology to my friends,
 That I may put them in mind of their latter ends.
 If men will act like a maid smiling over a churn,
 They ought not, when it comes to another's turn,
 To grow sour at what a friend may utter,
 Knowing and feeling that we all have need of butter.
 False friends, fie! fie! Our friendship you shan't sever;
 In spite we will be greater friends than ever.

EPIGRAMS

49

Call that the public voice which is their error?
Like as a monkey, peeping in a mirror,
Admires all his colours brown and warm,
And never once perceives his ugly form.

50

Some people admire the work of a fool,
For it's sure to keep your judgement cool;
It does not reproach you with want of wit;
It is not like a lawyer serving a writ.

51

To Chloe's breast young Cupid slyly stole,
But he crept in at Myra's pocket-hole.

QUATRAINS AND COUPLETS

I

O lapwing! thou fliest around the heath,
Nor seest the net that is spread beneath.
Why dost thou not fly among the corn fields?
They cannot spread nets where a harvest yields.¹

2

They said this mystery never shall cease:
The priest promotes war, and the soldier peace.

3

Love to faults is always blind;
Always is to joy inclin'd,
Lawless, wing'd and unconfin'd,
And breaks all chains from every mind.

Deceit to secrecy confin'd,
Lawful, cautious and refin'd;
To anything but interest blind,
And forges fetters for the mind.

¹ Quatrains and Couplets 1-21 are from the MS. Book, 22, 23 from Blake's marginalia in Reynolds' *Discourses*, and 24-29 from the Prophetic Books.

QUATRAINS AND COUPLETS

4

There souls of men are bought and sold,
And milk-fed infancy for gold ;
And youth to slaughter-houses led,
And beauty, for a bit of bread.

5

Soft Snow

I walkèd abroad on a snowy day :
I ask'd the soft snow with me to play :
She play'd and she melted in all her prime ;
And the winter call'd it a dreadful crime.

6

The sword sung on the barren heath,
The sickle in the fruitful field :
The sword he sung a song of death,
But could not make the sickle yield.

QUATRAINS AND COUPLETS

7

Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs and flaming hair,
But desire gratified
Plants fruits of life and beauty there.

8

If you trap the moment before it's ripe,
The tears of repentance you'll certainly wipe;
But if once you let the ripe moment go,
You can never wipe off the tears of woe.

9

Ham
{ The countless gold of a merry heart,
The rubies and pearls of a loving eye,
The indolent never can bring to the mart,
Nor the secret hoard up in his treasury.

see page 178 stanza 19

QUATRAINS AND COUPLETS

10

Several Questions Answered

Eternity

1

He who bends to himself a joy
Doth the wingèd life destroy ;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

2

The look of love alarms,
Because it's fill'd with fire ;
But the look of soft deceit
Shall win the lover's hire.

3

Soft deceit and idleness,
These are Beauty's sweetest dress.

4

What is it men in women do require ?
The lineaments of gratified desire.
What is it women do in men require ?
The lineaments of gratified desire.

5

An ancient Proverb

Remove away that black'ning church,
Remove away that marriage hearse,
Remove away that man of blood—
You'll quite remove the ancient curse.

QUATRAINS AND COUPLETS

I 1

Terror in the house does roar;
But Pity stands before the door.

I 2

Anger and wrath my bosom rends:
I thought them the errors of friends.
But all my limbs with warmth glow:
I find them the errors of the foe.

I 3

The angel that presided o'er my birth
Said 'Little creature, form'd of joy and mirth,
Go, love without the help of anything on earth.'

I 4

If I e'er grow to man's estate,
O! give to me a woman's fate.
May I govern all, both great and small,
Have the last word, and take the wall.

I 5

Great things are done when men and mountains meet;
This is not done by jostling in the street.

I 6

If you play a game of chance, know, before you begin,
If you are benevolent you will never win.

QUATRAINS AND COUPLETS

17

Grown old in love from seven till seven times seven,
I oft have wish'd for Hell, for ease from Heaven

18

To God

If you have form'd a circle to go into,
Go into it yourself, and see how you would do.

*Two kinds of
Riches.*

19

See page 175

Since all the riches of this world
May be gifts from the devil and earthly kings,
I should suspect that I worshipp'd the devil
If I thank'd my God for worldly things.

20

Nail his neck to the cross: nail it with a nail.
Nail his neck to the cross: ye all have power over
his tail.

21

Do what you will this life's a fiction,
And is made up of contradiction.

22

When France got free, Europe, 'twixt fools and knaves,
Were savage first to France, and after—slaves.

QUATRAINS AND COUPLETS

23

When nations grow old, the Arts grow cold,
And commerce settles on every tree;
And the poor and the old can live upon gold,
For all are born poor, aged sixty-three.

24

FROM 'THE BOOK OF THEL'

Thel's Motto

Does the eagle know what is in the pit
Or wilt thou go ask the mole?
Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod,
Or Love in a golden bowl?

25

FROM 'THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN
AND HELL'

Prayers plough not: praises reap not.
Joys laugh not: sorrows weep not.

26

FROM 'JERUSALEM'

Each man is in his spectre's power
Until the arrival of that hour
When his humanity awake,
And cast his spectre into the lake.

QUATRAINS AND COUPLETS

27

To the Christians

I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall.

28

Especially to the Female

In Heaven the only art of living
Is forgetting and forgiving;
But if you on earth forgive
You shall not find where to live.

29

FROM 'THE GATES OF PARADISE'

The Sun's light, when he unfolds it,
Depends on the organ that beholds it.

POEMS FROM
'THE PROPHETIC BOOKS'

(1789-1810)

DEDICATION OF
'BLAKE'S ILLUSTRATIONS
OF BLAIR'S GRAVE'

(1808)

POEMS FROM
THE PROPHETIC BOOKS
FROM 'VISIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS
OF ALBION'

The Argument

I LOVÈD Theotormon,
And I was not ashamed;
I trembled in my virgin fears,
And I hid in Leutha's vale!

I pluckèd Leutha's flower,
And I rose up from the vale;
But the terrible thunders tore
My virgin mantle in twain.

PROPHETIC BOOKS



FROM 'MILTON'

Preface

AND did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

*armour is
mental*

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets.
Numbers xi. 29.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

FROM 'JERUSALEM'

To the Public

READER of books of Heaven
And of that God from whom
Who in mysterious Sinai's awful cave
To man the wondrous art of writing gave,
Again He speaks in thunder and in fire,
Thunder of thought, and flames of fierce desire.
Even from the depths of Hell His voice I hear
Within the unfathom'd caverns of my ear.
Therefore I print: nor vain my types shall be.
Heaven, Earth, and Hell, henceforth shall live in harmony.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

To the Jews

THE fields from Islington to Marylebone,
To Primrose Hill and Saint John's Wood,
Were builded over with pillars of gold;
And there Jerusalem's pillars stood.

Her little ones ran on the fields,
The Lamb of God among them seen,
And fair Jerusalem, His Bride,
Among the little meadows green.

Pancras and Kentish Town repose
Among her golden pillars high,
Among her golden arches which
Shine upon the starry sky.

The Jew's-harp-house and the Green Man,
The Ponds where boys to bathe delight,
The fields of cows by William's farm,
Shine in Jerusalem's pleasant sight.

She walks upon our meadows green;
The Lamb of God walks by her side;
And every English child is seen,
Children of Jesus and His Bride.

Forgiving trespasses and sins
Lest Babylon, with cruel Og,
With moral and self-righteous law,
Should crucify in Satan's synagogue.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

What are those golden builders doing
Near mournful ever-weeping Paddington,
Standing above that mighty ruin,
Where Satan the first victory won:

Where Albion slept beneath the fatal tree,
And the Druid's golden knife
Rioted in human gore
In offerings of human life?

They groan'd aloud on London stone,
They groan'd aloud on Tyburn's brook:
Albion gave his deadly groan,
And all the Atlantic mountains shook.

Albion's spectre from his loins
Tore forth in all the pomp of War;
Satan his name; in flames of fire
He stretch'd his Druid pillars far.

Jerusalem fell from Lambeth's vale,
Down thro' Poplar and Old Bow,
Thro' Malden, and across the sea,
In war and howling, death and woe.

The Rhine was red with human blood;
The Danube roll'd a purple tide;
On the Euphrates Satan stood,
And over Asia stretch'd his pride.

He wither'd up sweet Zion's hill
From every nation of the earth;
He wither'd up Jerusalem's gates,
And in a dark land gave her birth.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

He wither'd up the human form
By laws of sacrifice for sin,
Till it became a mortal worm,
But oh! translucent all within.

The Divine Vision still was seen,
Still was the Human Form Divine;
Weeping, in weak and mortal clay,
O Jesus! still the form was Thine!

And Thine the Human Face; and Thine
The Human Hands, and Feet, and Breath,
Entering thro' the Gates of Birth,
And passing thro' the Gates of Death.

And O Thou Lamb of God! whom I
Slew in my dark self-righteous pride,
Art Thou return'd to Albion's land,
And is Jerusalem Thy Bride?

Come to my arms: and nevermore
Depart; but dwell for ever here;
Create my spirit to Thy love;
Subdue my spectre to Thy fear.

Spectre of Albion! warlike fiend!
In clouds of blood and ruin roll'd,
I here reclaim thee as my own,
My selfhood—Satan arm'd in gold!

Is this thy soft family-love,
Thy cruel patriarchal pride;
Planting thy family alone,
Destroying all the world beside?

PROPHETIC BOOKS

A man's worst enemies are those
Of his own house and family;
And he who makes his law a curse,
By his own law shall surely die.

In my exchanges every land
Shall walk; and mine in every land,
Mutual shall build Jerusalem,
Both heart in heart and hand in hand.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

To the Deists

I SAW a Monk of Charlemaine
Arise before my sight :
I talk'd with the Grey Monk as we stood
In beams of infernal light.

Gibbon arose with a lash of steel,
And Voltaire with a wracking wheel ;
The Schools, in clouds of learning roll'd,
Arose with War in iron and gold.

'Thou lazy Monk !' they sound afar,
'In vain condemning glorious War ;
And, in your cell, you shall ever dwell :
Rise, War, and bind him in his cell !'

The blood red ran from the Grey Monk's side,
His hands and feet were wounded wide,
His body bent, his arms and knees
Like to the roots of ancient trees.

When Satan first the black bow bent
And the moral law from the Gospel rent,
He forg'd the law into a sword,
And spill'd the blood of mercy's Lord.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

Titus ! Constantine ! Charlemaine !
O Voltaire ! Rousseau ! Gibbon ! Vain
Your Grecian mocks and Roman sword
Against this image of his Lord ;

For a tear is an intellectual thing ;
And a sigh is the sword of an angel king ;
And the bitter groan of a martyr's woe
Is an arrow from the Almighty's Bow.

To the Christians

ENGLAND ! awake ! awake ! awake !
Jerusalem thy sister calls !
Why wilt thou sleep the sleep of death,
And close her from thy ancient walls ?

Thy hills and valleys felt her feet
Gently upon their bosoms move :
Thy gates beheld sweet Zion's ways ;
Then was a time of joy and love.

And now the time returns again :
Our souls exult, and London's towers
Receive the Lamb of God to dwell
In England's green and pleasant bowers.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

FROM 'THE GATES OF PARADISE'

[*Prologue*]

MUTUAL forgiveness of each vice,
Such are the Gates of Paradise,
Against the accuser's chief desire,
Who walk'd among the stones of fire.
Jehovah's Finger wrote The Law;
Then wept; then rose in zeal and awe,
And the dead corpse, from Sinai's heat,
Buried beneath His Mercy-seat.
O Christians! Christians! tell me why
You rear it on your altars high?

PROPHETIC BOOKS

The Keys

THE Caterpillar on the leaf
Reminds thee of thy mother's grief.

of the Gates

My eternal man set in repose,
The female from his darkness rose;
And she found me beneath a tree,
A mandrake, and in her veil hid me.
Serpent reasonings us entice
Of good and evil, virtue and vice,
Doubt self-jealous, watery folly.
Struggling thro' earth's melancholy,
Naked in air, in shame and fear,
Blind in fire, with shield and spear,
Two horrid reasoning cloven fiction,
In doubt, which is self-contradiction,
A dark Hermaphrodite we stood,—
Rational truth, root of evil and good.
Round me flew the flaming sword;
Round her snowy whirlwinds roar'd,
Freezing her veil, the mundane shell.
I rent the veil where the dead dwell:
When weary man enters his cave,
He meets his Saviour in the grave.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

Some find a female garment there,
And some a male, woven with care;
Lest the sexual garments sweet
Should grow a devouring winding-sheet.
One dies! Alas! the Living and Dead!
One is slain! and one is fled!
In vain-glory hatcht and nurst,
By double spectres, self-accurst.
My son! my son! thou treatest me
But as I have instructed thee.
On the shadows of the moon,
Climbing thro' Night's highest noon:
In 'Time's ocean falling, drown'd:
In aged ignorance profound,
Holy and cold, I clipp'd the wings
Of all sublunary things,
And in depths of my dungeons
Closed the father and the sons.
But when once I did descry
The immortal man that cannot die,
Thro' evening shades I haste away
To close the labours of my day.
The Door of Death I open found,
And the worm weaving in the ground:
Thou'rt my mother, from the womb;
Wife, sister, daughter, to the tomb:
Weaving to dreams the sexual strife,
And weeping over the web of life.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

Epilogue

*To the Accuser who is
The God of this World*

TRULY, my Satan, thou art but a dunce,
And dost not know the garment from the man ;
Every harlot was a virgin once,
Nor canst thou ever change Kate into Nan.

Tho' thou art worshippèd by the names divine
Of Jesus and Jehovah, thou art still
The son of morn in weary Night's decline,
The lost traveller's dream under the hill.

PROPHETIC BOOKS

DEDICATION OF 'BLAKE'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF BLAIR'S GRAVE'

To the Queen

THE Door of Death is made of gold,
That mortal eyes cannot behold;
But, when the mortal eyes are clos'd,
And cold and pale the limbs repos'd,
The soul awakes; and, wond'ring, sees
In her mild hand the golden Keys:
The Grave is Heaven's Golden Gate,
And rich and poor around it wait;
O shepherdess of England's fold,
Behold this Gate of Pearl and Gold!

To dedicate to England's Queen
The visions that my soul has seen,
And, by her kind permission, bring
What I have borne on solemn wing,
From the vast regions of the Grave,
Before her throne my wings I wave;
Bowing before my sov'reign's feet,
'The Grave produc'd these blossoms sweet
In mild repose from earthly strife;
The blossoms of Eternal Life!'

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